Wanderings and Diversions

E. V. Lucas

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WANDERINGS AND DIVERSIONS

BY

E. V. LUCAS

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WANDERINGS AND DIVERSIONS

ZIGZAGS IN FRANCE AND VARIOUS ESSAYS

ZIGZAGS IN FRANCE

I. The Soothing Car

When one is very tired—too tired to want to read, too tired to want to walk or even to fish, and far too tired to dare to sit still and invite one's soul to loaf—what is the best form of holiday and rest?

Everyone may have a different answer, but I advance the suggestion that a motor tour through an unknown country—and a civilized country for choice—say France—can supply recreation with repose to an unusually satisfactory degree. The badness of the roads leads to a certain amount of exercise, while the spectacle of the people, the fields, the woods, the villages and the towns, as they unfold and melt away, is continually and sufficiently interesting for beguilement. When it is not, you can sleep; at least I can, having mastered the art of sleeping anywhere, except in bed, and almost at any time, under no matter what conditions of discomfort.

There are two drawbacks to a holiday of this description, and one of these is not insuperable. The first is the anxiety that all but the most lavish or careless must feel as the kilometres mount up—for in a hired car you pay so many francs per kilometre. If the car

is your own, you are free from this canker. Nothing, however, can emancipate you from the other, which is concerned with the doubts that assail you as evening draws near and the lodging for the night has to be chosen. Will it be clean? Will the bed be damp? Will there be anything to eat? And, above all, as you get farther south, will there be mosquitoes? Although most inn-keepers deny that such insects have ever been seen within many miles, mosquitoes exist; and even one is enough.

II. The "Vanne Rouge"

It was on a trial trip on the day before the real start that I soon learned that Albert the chauffeur was a demon driver. I bade him take me to Montigny on the banks of the Loing, having been told of an inn there of super-excellence; and the search for an inn of super-excellence is of course one of the joys of life, transcended only by finding it. Some one had told me of the "Vanne Rouge" at Montigny, and I must needs eat there. I recommend the "Vanne Rouge" wholeheartedly; I am not sure it is not the best riverside inn I have ever known. Riverside is the *mot juste*, for if you are not careful, and if the delicacy that you are enjoying provides pleasure so ecstatic that you make any involuntary movement, you are likely, if your chair is on the water side of the table, to fall in. The *specialité* is the sinuous and succulent eel, a fish which the foolishly-refined frown upon in our country, but the French rejoice in; and it is drawn from the adjacent

weir almost while you wait. When next you are in Paris with a fine day for an excursion and no plans, let me counsel you to try Montigny on the Loing.

III. The Fratellini

That evening in Paris I spent in the usual way: I went to see the Three Brothers.

All English visitors to Paris, except those to whom the spoken French word, and particularly when it is spoken on the stage, presents no difficulties, must, after dinner, find themselves in difficulties. They are reluctant to go to bed too soon, because that, in the City of Light, is both a treachery and a waste of time; they shrink from the inferiority and tedium of the Paris music hall; yet there are three hours at least to kill before the night cabarets open. How to kill them?

My own solution is to call in the aid of the Three Brothers.

Let me begin by saying that on that night the Three Brothers were no longer at their old home, the Medrano, the little circus on Montmartre, but at a rival house, the Cirque d'Hiver. Wherever they are, they should be as important to the visitor to Paris as is the Louvre or the Tomb of Napoleon; perhaps more important, for the Fratellini, alas! are but human, and must fade or fall, whereas the Louvre and the Invalides will be there next time, again to be avoided.

Every one who has seen the Fratellini knows that their special merit is to be masters equally of nonsense and of melody, and I shall say nothing of their per-

formance except as regards the novelty which it introduced—a novelty for which I was utterly unprepared, and which struck me by its prettiness as being probably unique in circus drollery, where prettiness is usually an absentee.

It is obvious that clowns must, occasionally at any rate, become fathers; such amusing men naturally would find wives, and, even in France, children are still now and then born. But that clowns' children, while still in their infancy, are clowns too—had you thought of that? I mean, in real life; all of us who saw *Pantaloon* know about the miniature Joey of the stage. But that clowns should have children capable of entering the ring and being on the verge of proficiency in nonsense and melody—who had thought of that?

Well, there came a moment in the evening when the Fratellino with the traditional white face, and the traditional frills and white stockings, and the little elegant feet all his own, and the irresistible smile—François, in fact—there came a moment when it was necessary to say something boastful about paternity, and he said it; and, having said it, he proved his point by leaving the ring and returning with a little son, whitefaced and frilled like himself.

It is, as you know, with clowns an article of faith not to be outdone, and so the second Fratellino, the quiet, rather wistful and shy one, who dresses like a decayed butler, and carries a concertino under his arm, and is more kicked against than kicking—and so this one, whose name is Paul, not to be outdone, in his turn, left the ring and came back leading by the hand a

little son of his own engendering, and leading him with triumph: a little son looking for all the world like a decayed butler through the wrong end of the telescope.

Well, you see what is coming? That third Fratellino, the scarecrow Albert, the real fool of the family, with the red nose and the long black hair and the enormous boots, the resilient ass who, in spite of every kind of indignity, has never yet been put to shame—what did he, but also rush from the ring and caper back with a miniature replica of himself in tow, red-nosed and over-booted, too. And then all three clownlings—the Piccoli Fratellini shall we call them?—proved themselves, in the ring, to be chips of the old block.

The circus, where ability and agility start so early, is the only place where such an event could occur, although, of course, there was once a Young Roscius in real life as well as an Infant Phenomenon in fiction, while (to say nothing of Mozart) child musicians whose parents think them geniuses are numberless. There are also child novelists, of whom Daisy Ashford is chief, and among painters who began prematurely are Millais and the brothers Detmold. But these have seasons of eclipse, during which the child is growing into the adult, whereas in the circus the perfecting of talent is steady, and the child who is to-day the apex of the acrobatic pyramid and is flung into the air by a gradual series of brothers, will, as he grows heavier, go through all the various stages, until in course of time he is himself the biggest and strongest and it is upon his knees, arms, shoulders, and cranium that the whole troupe will be sustained.

These little Fratellini, being children of the Magic Ring, are bound to be able to do everything, and I foresee long and uninterrupted and triumphant careers for them.

* * * * *

Thus far I wrote in the late autumn of 1924. Alas, for the disposing hand of God! During the winter the little son of Paul, the tiny miniature butler, as I have described him, caught a cold, developed pneumonia, and died in a day or so. A mourning card with a black edge totally out of scale with his infantile, fragile little frame, but making an effort to be proportionate to his parents' grief, informed me of the tragedy and still stands on my mantelpiece as a reminder of the bitter that lurks in the sweet, and of the vanity of human wishes.

IV. Albert

But let me now describe Albert, who to his other merits added that of speaking English as well as anyone need. A demon driver, yes. He also was—and perhaps is, but something must happen some day—a most capable man, very tall, very strong, with an instant smile of such charm that all censure dissolved and you smiled too; but, like so many Frenchmen, he had no nerves, no sensitiveness, no consideration for others. He was the kind of driver upon whom such warnings as "Ralentir" and "Attention!" exercise only a provocative effect; while an intimation that a "brusque" turning was imminent was a sure call to the accelera-

tor's artful aid. The diagram of a "cassis" was the only notice that could really cramp his style, a cassis being a trough across the road to carry away a rivulet, or a raised ridge.

He scattered mud and juggernauted through villages in a way that kept me blushing, and he had all the good chauffeur's want of topographical instinct and bump of locality; all the good chauffeur's inability to see hotel signs. I suppose that their preoccupation being with the road, and chiefly with the road as it discloses itself for a space of some thirty yards from the bonnet, chauffeurs lose the power of looking at anything on either side. Certainly they strike me as the least observant of men; and Albert was their chief. But, these limitations apart, he was a great card, full of enterprise and adventurousness, and with a democratic tendency that gave him a peculiar and special quality, the result, I suppose, of several years' residence in America.

How many French chauffeurs driving foreigners in hired cars would bathe every morning when there was a sea to bathe in? or buy lines of bait and pull a boat when there was a sea to fish in? or sit down to Baccarat when there was a casino to gamble in—not the insipid Boule but Baccarat? Albert did all these things. And he made friends wherever he went, shooting men, women, children, and even policemen dead with that smile of his on its hair trigger. "Mais, Monsieur l'Agent, je ne suis pas maladroit"—I shall never forget him saying this to a fevered traffic controller in Lyons and by his tone placating if he could not convert.

We had but two misadventures. One I will describe later; the other was when once in a village we hit an unhastening goose very hard, although not fatally, in the region of the tail. "Albert," I said in anger, "you *must* go slower through villages. It is disgusting to be so callous." He looked at me wonderingly, as though this were a new idea, and I believe it was, for he had no memory, and then, "Who would stop for a go-o-o-o-se?" he inquired.

V. The Foreign French

When the country became monotonous, and I had slept enough, I leaned back and thought about the French. First and last of the great French bubble which persists and persists, although every one can prick it: their reputation for quick intelligence. Within their limits they have an instant verbal reaction, it is true: that is to say, when you touch on the main facts of life, such as eating, drinking, loving and dying, they are ready with a reply, often so neatly and epigrammatically expressed as to resemble wit; but with a new idea, a reference to anything outside these boundaries, a question involving any half-shade or subtlety, they are as stupid as a village dunce is anywhere. It is then that their features, their melancholy features (for how few French faces are happy?) suddenly freeze into blankness, and their most trusty weapon of defence, the word "Comment?" takes on its hardest, coldest tone or fiercest hostility.

That passion to know about things which makes

English and American strangers so conversable hardly exists in France, where every one, knowing so much about the four facts of life which I have enumerated, needs to know, or cares to know, nothing else. Nor have they the mechanical means of knowledge. In all my journeyings I noticed only one house with broadcasting wires; and the newspapers are for the towns only, and then how rarely you see them being read! In England there is not a village, however remote, in which some one is not interested in the result of the 3.15; but in France interest in racing (I mention this as an example, not with any suggestion that France should adopt our habits) is confined to the city people who visit the racecourse. It is impossible, looking at the villagers of France, all prematurely aged, all lined and bent and apparently mirthless, to imagine any of them following form. One's chief thought as one watches them, either in the fields, or on their way outwards or homewards, is of the extraordinary hold that the soil can exert, and what a terrible vampire it is.

VI. French Games

Perhaps what one chiefly misses in the rural parts is youth, and youth's accompaniment, joy. It would seem that all the boys and girls are in the towns. You see a few children, a few mongrel dogs (seldom a pure-bred one), many old people. But the boys and girls, where are they? And as for games, there were none till we approached Toulon, where on a Sunday morning the road was continually blocked by little parties of men in their shirt-sleeves playing that odd form of

bowls for which Provence is famous. Even these men, whose interest in the fortunes of the contest was intense, had not thought it worth while to find a retired arena, and the consequence was that every car held them up. Could anything be more different from bowls in England: with us, a hallowed ritual on a green sacred and apart?

I watched several games in a dusty waste space at Sisteron, and again, as when staying at Avignon years ago, was impressed by the skill of the last players, who are held in reserve to toss the iron ball high in the air so that it drops, at a distance of twenty yards or more, bang on top of the adversary sphere which it is necessary to dislodge. Again and again this was accurately done. The game is a blend of our bowls and our quoits. For the rest, France has, just outside the big towns, enclosures in which Rugby goal posts may be perceived, but I saw no game in progress.

VII. Houses and Flowers

The vastness of France is always present in one's mind, at any rate the English mind accustomed to winding roads from which long vistas are infrequent, and to small fields and meadows enclosed within hedges or walls. So much of France is open, without any visible bounds, and so many roads are straight, stretching apparently to infinity: so straight that the last lap in the far distance, rising to the ultimate horizon, often has the appearance of an obelisk.

An American coming from the great spaces probably finds France only less small than England; but to

me its extent is always surprising. Not only its extent but its emptiness, an effect produced, I suppose, not a little by the French custom of dwelling compactly in towns and villages, and not in houses in between. In England the towns and villages do not end at the last house: there are outlying manors, homesteads and cottages, so that you often have difficulty in distinguishing between the last house of one village and the first house of the next; but in France the line of demarcation between habitations and country is firmly drawn. That is, in the country proper.

Yet around any big town to-day have sprung up environs consisting of the most trifling and insubstantial huts that could be imagined, all jostled together at every angle, rather like the sheds in English allotments but far more ostentatious in appearance, although hardly more commodious. In these huts, all scrupulously named —"Mon Désir," "Mon Abri," "Le Nid," "Beau Sèjour," "Belle Vue"—few of them with more than two rooms and none with any drainage, French clerks and shop assistants now live in their thousands: all, I suppose, proud to be householders and prouder still to be landowners. Some have attempts at gardens, but no attempts at what we call taste in flowers, a group of marigolds or nasturtiums being sufficient homage to Flora.

The way of the French with flowers has always been perplexing and distressing to the English, and to take such a journey as I have done is only to have those feelings intensified. Between the discordant huddle of their market stalls and the exotic orchids and

roses of the expensive Parisian florists there seems to be no medium. But this is a digression: what I wanted to say about the riot of "abriculture" that has set in in France, is that probably not more than one in every hundred of these more-than-jerry-built and insanitary shelters would be passed by any Local Authority in England. France, the land of bureaucracy, is, it would seem, utterly free when it comes to building. I have no idea as to the terms on which these squatters occupy their square yards of "terrain"; but if it is freehold some one has been very short-sighted, for there can now never be any right development of the suburbs that they cover.

The French house may well be smaller than the English—although the smallness of these abris is often incredible and grotesque—because the French house is a place to leave. In England, where our houses are notoriously our castles, we like to enter and turn the key. But the French live outside their houses far more than in; indeed you might almost say that the first duty of the French house is to contain the chairs which the owner and his wife will carry out of doors in order to make the world their sitting-room. All over France I saw French people sitting on chairs outside their houses, the men doing nothing, the women knitting. Even the bedding is constantly endeavouring to push its way through the windows.

VIII. The Birds

For the most part the fair land of France belongs to the peasant. The peasant and the peasant's wife,

patient and undefeatable, are the only human beings that you see in the fields: almost the only living things, for cattle are very rare, which probably explains the scarcity and preciousness of milk, and sheep by no means general as in England; while the only bird that you can be sure of seeing is the magpie.

Une pie, tant pis,
Deux pies, tant mi'!

I murmured to myself all day long. On a wild waste space under the Puy de Dôme I saw a buzzard, and there were lonely sparrow-hawks and crows here and there; but the bird life to which we are accustomed in the English countryside is absent. I saw with my own eyes only one brace of partridges, although it was September, and two or three chasseurs with a pointer or setter were noted every day.

In England we have nothing to compare with the solitary French chasseur. We either carry our guns in company, as guests or over our own shooting, or we stay at home. Only game-keepers shoot alone, or farmers in the dusk of the evening when the rabbits' scuts gleam white. But the solitary French chasseur is seen frequently enough to be a symbol of France.

IX. The Riddle of the Coops

Even chickens are scarce, which reminds me of a problem, with two facets, which in one form increasingly presents itself to anyone now moving about England: "What becomes of all those chickens?" and in France "Where do all the chickens that we eat come from?"

Because in England, as every motorist can testify, there are chickens everywhere, mostly white; not only the half-dozens that have always scratched in cottage gardens or beside the road and fled squawking from the approaching terror; but the hundreds in the paddocks of the detached residences, and the thousands in the large, orderly, and often highly organized chicken farms which occur every quarter of a mile in whatever direction you travel; with sheds and enclosures and incubators and, somewhere in the adjacent bungalow, account books and ledgers; and, I suppose, not so far away, kestrels and sparrow-hawks sharpening their claws and foxes licking their lips. The old promise to the English farm labourer, of which such fun used to be made, of three acres and a cow, having vanished, it would seem now to a stranger that the countryman's reward was the one acre and too many hens, and that every parent in doubt as to what to do with his boy should set him quickly to learn the arts of selling chicken-food and wire-netting, and getting payment for them.

There must to-day be millions of Leghorns where even a year ago there were only scores, and eleven years ago only units. But what becomes of them? Wherever they may stray it would seem never to be towards the kitchen. The oven yawns for them in vain. In spite of the battalions of Rhode Island Reds now surrounding every village, the traveller has no more chance of a chicken, hot or cold, in the village inn, than he had in the old days, before the world suddenly filled with ex-officers poring over the last issue

of *Our Feathered Breadwinners.* Nor, threading your way through Wyandottes, were you to knock at the door of the next poultry farmer's and crave permission to share the impending meal, would you find traces of wing, liver, breast or drumstick, merrythought or leg. In a sea of edible, eligible fowls enisled, you would be offered tinned tongue or Canterbury lamb.

And curiosity is aroused not only by the non-existence of the flesh of the fowl, but of eggs too. Where are the eggs? Here are Buff Orpingtons laying away for dear life; and yet all over England to-day, just as of old, on breakfast tables with six people sitting at them, is a plate holding three eggs in three egg-cups (often in coseys), setting up afresh that competition in self-sacrifice of which we were all so tired ages agone. The mystery deepens.

And now for the still greater mystery awaiting you on the other side of the Channel. The mystery in England is, What becomes of the dead fowls? The mystery in France is, Where are the living? In England, as I say, the traveller sees on every hand chickens, white and black, red and buff, but chiefly white, that are as the sands of the seashore for multitude; but a tender and toothsome chicken on the table is a rarity, an egg an event. In France he catches sight, very occasionally, here and there, of a lean and sinewy rooster amid a leaner and more sinewy seraglio, yet there is a poulet within rapid reach of every home, be it never so humble, and as likely as not it is preceded by an omelette, which, as proverbial lore assures us, you cannot have without the breaking of eggs. How is this?

It was Henri IV, was it not, who, in his modest dream of a French Utopia, expressed the wish that every peasant's home should have a poule in the pot? Well, the traveller in France to-day, if the inns can be taken as evidence, is able to affirm that that hope is realized. Wherever the chickens of France may, in life, hide themselves, they loyally turn up to time in the salle-à-manger, not forgetting salad in their wake. You get the first of them in the restaurant car on the way to Paris, and thereafter, as long as you remain in France, whether in Paris or in the country, roast chickens unfailingly appear. How is this?

X. A Land of Peasants

To return to the desolate rural districts, it is not only odd that one sees in the fields nothing but peasants, and in the villages nothing but villagers; odder still to the English eye is the absence of those others who make up country life with us: the types: the squire, the parson, the parson's wife, the doctor, the schoolboys and schoolgirls home for the holidays, the shopkeepers. France has, in her village streets, no correlative of the squire. There may be, behind the walls of a neighbouring château, a comte and comtesse, but they rarely emerge. It has a priest, but how seldom do you see a priest! I saw not one in any but churches and the streets of the towns; and of course the parson's wife is non-existent. I saw in all my travels no one who was obviously a doctor; no doctor's car on its rounds. As for the shopkeepers, there is normally

but one of each: a butcher, and a grocer who probably bakes as well. And there is no village life during the day, because every one else is in the fields. The land has the first call.

Besides the peasant actually working in the fields and the solitary occasional sportsman, the only wayside figures in France are the goatherds and the cowherds. No one ever seems to be walking between villages; roadmenders are, alas! only too seldom found. But the cowherdess and the goatherdess, with their knitting, and, when they are old, with their camp stools, are frequent. The lack of hedges makes them necessary, but one is surprised that such a practical folk as the French have not invented some kind of temporary movable fence to do away with the necessity of constant watching: particularly as both the young girls and the old women would probably be far more useful in the house. Swineherds I never saw, but in the south goose-girls in plenty, and turkey-girls now and then.

XI. The Start

The route to Chartres, where the cathedral is waiting, takes you up the Champs Elysées, down the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, the most beautiful residential road in the world, through the Bois and along the river to the Pont St. Cloud; then over the bridge and up the steep winding hill (with the vast panorama of the Bois and Paris and the Eiffel Tower at the first turn), through St. Cloud's upper regions by the edge of the park to Ville d'Avray and so to Versailles.

From Versailles the road runs through St. Cyr, where there is a great military academy, over which a dirigible was performing evolutions. It was there that I noticed the first of the many streets named after Emile Zola. The French are much more disposed to honour their prophets than our country is: I found a Rue Emile Zola often, a Rue Victor Hugo constantly. But Charles Dickens Streets or Alfred Tennyson Roads are very rare in England, although it is true that a Barrie Avenue has just been added to Dumfries.

It was after St. Cyr, on the high ground, that the communal apple trees began to line the road, heavy and golden with fruit. These I was to find all over France, and never did I see anyone making free with them. Could we, I wonder, in England, where no one is a slave, respect such a right? Again, I doubt it. But the French can.

The other public fruit of France is the walnut. It is indeed the land of walnuts, so much so that in the French language the word "noix" is applied solely to that delicacy, and whatever other nuts may be are given other descriptions: whereas with us *the* nut is the hazel, and the walnut is in a subdivision. While I was in France I noticed a paragraph in a paper stating that the Minister of Agriculture had summoned a conference to inquire into the further potentialities of the walnut. The chestnut, it seems, is found useful by manufacturers of chocolate; possibly the walnut is now also doomed to be pressed into the service of the substitutors.

XII. War Memorials

In a village between St. Cyr and Rambouillet I saw the first of the many war memorials that one now finds all over France. We in England have, in every village, our war memorials too, but in the majority of cases they take the form of tablet-records in the churches or on walls. The French, with their love of sculpture and their dramatic energy, have, even in the tiny villages, their symbolic statuary. I suppose that I saw some hundreds of these, all having a certain resemblance and yet all different: some with a soldier triumphant, sounding a charge, waving a sword, aiming a rifle; some with a soldier dead and an angel bending over him or bearing him to glory: many with the Gallic cock crowing in the pride of victory: and, incised in brass or stone, the names. No village is too small to have contributed its martyrs to German arrogance. Certain memorials were still not complete, the more pretentious ones; one or two I saw with the sheeting tied over them ready to be formally unveiled.

There is another feature, less melancholy, common to every village and town, and that is an inn, often the most modest, called the Hôtel de France. No hamlet is too minute to boast an Hôtel de France. Yet never at home have I seen, or has anyone seen, an Hotel of England or The English Hotel. When it comes down to bedrock I imagine that most peoples are equally patriotic, equally fond and proud of their native land. But we talk about it less than the French, put less of it in the shop window. These numberless and often very

inferior Hôtels de France are an indication; the naming of streets, of which I have just said something, is another. Every street name in France carries an historical, literary or artistic association, so that an inquisitive child who insisted on replies might learn much of his country's achievement even in a townlet. But do the English do anything like this? Not often.

Reverting to the matter of hotels, France has its White Horse, and Black Horse too, and sometimes the meanest hostelry will carry the most imposing title, such as Grand Hôtel de l'Univers, which constantly crops up, with broken shutters and, on the pavement, a rickety table and a bicycle stand. I wonder what the first English inn-keeper to adopt the title Grand Hotel thought he was doing. Did he think of "Grand" as "grand" or "great"? I suspect he thought of it as "grand," and of course that is how every one on our side of the Channel still views the matter, at any rate before we stay there.

XIII. Rambouillet

I wished that I had lunched early at Rambouillet instead of pushing on to Chartres, for Rambouillet has pleasanter inns and is a delightful town to loiter in. Its famous château, on the edge of the great forest in which the King of France used to hunt, is now, four hundred years after the great François the First breathed his last there, one of the homes of the President of the Republic. The park is very beautiful, a compromise between the formality of Versailles and Nature herself.

In the town I found one of the prettiest houses in France, so pretty that I guessed an English or American artist tenant: long and low and white, with shutters soft blue in colour, and red and mauve asters in the windows. The sight of it crystallized in my mind the suspicion that France owes to its shutters much of its charm. They are of all hues, more positive in the north where the sun is not so hot; more negative in the south, where the greens and reds fade into graciously tender tints. The French shutter, at any rate in the country, does not, however, suggest secrets. In the towns a closed house can have a sinister air, but in the country, no. In fact, there are no half-tones in France at all.

At Maintenon there would perhaps have been a better lunch than at Chartres, but I did not try. Rambouillet stood high; Maintenon, in a hollow, is on the Eure. In the château here once lived a remarkable woman, Françoise d'Aubigné, who first married and nursed that strange deformed creature Paul Scarron, the satirist; later became the governess of the children of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan; later, as Madame de Maintenon, took Madame de Montespan's place; and ultimately became queen and for many years virtually (and virtuously) ruled France. Having founded the Abbey of St. Cyr, she retired there when her star began to set, and died there in 1719, aged seventy-four. An astonishing career. Maintenon has, in addition to the château and its bridge, many good buildings, and in October smells deliciously of fallen leaves.

XIV. Chartres

Chartres cathedral stands high like Lincoln, rather than low like Canterbury, and you see its spires rising above the fields for some time before you reach the city—just the tops of them—as you see the top of Salisbury's loftier spire above shoulders of the hills as you draw near from the surrounding country: the only sign that an invisible city may lie below.

The last time I was at Chartres I travelled by train; to approach it by car is vastly more exciting. Indeed, whatever may be said against motoring—and I have myself expended no little ink in disapprobation of its haste and noise—the opportunity that it gives of entering towns by their gates, so to speak, is a priceless merit. Not that the car invented this form of access: horses and wayfarers on foot have never done anything else; but the car is the vehicle of the present and of the future. Sometimes, as at Moret on the Loing, through which I passed on the day before starting on this greater enterprise, the word gates is accurate; later I was to gain both Carcassonne and Aigues Mortes through actual mediæval portals.

How true it is that in order to know a place you must see it often! First impressions can be vivid, and their impact of suddenness and freshness is, of course, irrecoverable; but they can be very misleading, too. I first saw Chartres cathedral twenty years ago, and ever since then I have had in my mind's eye stained glass of glorious purple richness. But when I saw it again I found that the glass of reality was not equal to the

glass of defective recollection. Nothing else was a disappointment. And the formation of the windows that held the glass was even more beautiful than I had thought; indeed, the famous rose window over the Portail Royal—La Rose Occidentale—must be one of the loveliest pieces of delicate stone-work in the world: you must go to York to excel it; which leads to the reflection that in our pleasure in coloured glass we are too apt not to give enough credit to the masons who devised these lace-like frameworks.

I found also that I had completely forgotten that charming figure on a pillar on the north wall who holds out a sundial: l'Ange du Méridien, she is called. I had forgotten further that the spires were so different, and that the "Clocher neuf" (begun in 1134 and finished in 1513) was so much richer than the other and also was crocketted. But the "Clocher vieux" (1145-1160) will do.

I think that the Madonna and Child, known as Nôtre-Dame de Sous-Terre, is one of the most maternal of all the many sacred figures in which French cathedrals abound. She has large protective hands, and her little son is more human than often happens; nothing here of the capricious mischief of the Madonna of Nôtre-Dame in Paris.

XV. The Loire

We hit the Loire at the steep town of Blois, so steep that its streets now and then give up the struggle and become frankly flights of steps. To gain the famous château, standing high on its hill, you need either

strong legs or a powerful car. Having at the moment both, I chose the latter. It was odd to remember that this château, now nothing but a lure for tourists, surrounded by picture-postcard shops, was once a very hotbed of intrigue and tragedy; for it was here that the Duc de Guise, being a tiresome obstacle in the path of Henri III, had to be assassinated; and you see the fatal spot, and, in an adjoining Musée, a lurid painting of the outrage, with the duke in green stretched lifeless on the floor, while his enemy peeps in to hear the glad news. The duke's brother the Cardinal was also put away in this fatal building. Here Catherine de Médicis, past mistress of schemes and convenient removals, breathed her last. Here Marie de Médicis (whom Rubens apotheosized so exuberantly and often ludicrously in the Louvre) was for a while a prisoner by the order of her son Louis XIII, or, more accurately, of Cardinal Richelieu. Here François Premier swaggered, and I am glad he did so, for part of his swagger was the very beautiful winding staircase in the courtyard, which curls its way up a pentagonal frame most exquisitely proportioned and carved.

The château as a whole is anything but sinister, and the principal façade, in red brick and stone, with Louis XII in armour on horseback under his elaborate canopy, does nothing but smile, although on the other side there is a row of gargoyles, not unlike the devils of Nôtre-Dame, who seem to be aware of the past. But of course the most famous of all the Château sculptures, or at any rate the nearest and dearest to the simple and easily-satisfied French taste, is that which

represents a mother about to chastise, in the most rudimentary of all ways, a naughty child: known as "La Correction Maternelle."

From Blois the road to Tours is beside the Loire all the way, first on the right bank, then on the left as far as Amboise, and then on the right again. It is a fine serene river with many sand shoals in the middle, and the banks are like a series of Daubignys. A curious feature is the limestone cliffs, vertical as walls, that mark its bed. You see similar boundaries to the Seine about Honfleur, but they are not so domesticated as those of the Loire, where stables, cellars, and even extra living-rooms have been excavated.

At Amboise we stopped to look at the famous château, with its bloodstained history and its memories of Dumas (the brave Bussy!) and of Leonardo da Vinci. It is superbly placed on the cliff, with miles of the Loire at its feet, and on this golden afternoon the château was the placidest place on earth and anything but the scene of such a slaughter of Huguenots as occurred there in 1560, under the eyes, as it chanced, of Mary Queen of Scots, who was a sojourner there at the time. It was our old friend François Premier who offered the aged and weary Leonardo a haven at Amboise during his last days. Not in the great château but near by, although it is in the chapel of the château that Leonardo's remains are reputed to lie. Standing on the terrace one may feel assured that the fair prospect beneath is almost identically that on which the old master's eyes, that had seen and understood so much—almost too much—also rested.

XVI. Touraine

It was thrilling to be in Touraine, and even though I saw no abbeys nor heard the laughter resounding upon a droll story, the statue of Balzac in an open space in Tours seemed right: the recognizable Balzac of daily desk-life, not the strange synthetic figure of Rodin's imagination. But Tours is not droll; it has a staid and formal air; and my hotel was a centre of respectability. I forget its name, but an English hydro could not have been more sedate. There we sat, at little tables, many of the diners in evening dress and most of them talking English, not a few nasally. Worse attendance I never met with until I ordered a partridge (15 francs extra), when it dawned upon the maître d'hôtel that I might be worth looking after. But in France, on the regular tourist routes, and in Paris everywhere, attendance has gone to the devil. "It's the Americans," said a traveller to me. "Having nothing else to do, they ruin restaurants. It's their only industry. The women confide in the waiters and the men never send anything back."

I have to put it on record also that the bottles in which the best "vin du pays" is served at this Tours hotel are a scandal and a shame, for they are not full size, to begin with, and the "kick" in them is pathetically and disgracefully overdone. Thus can the modern post-war hôtelier punish his Allies and guests. But the house was well-managed upstairs and my bathroom had in it that comforting thing, a very low chair.

In the morning I found I had so bad a cold that it

seemed wise to get quickly to the sea, and so instead of exploring what the excursion offices call "Châteauland" I was away early for Bordeaux and Arcachon. At Arcachon, the papers said, there was sunshine and warmth, neither of which was conspicuous in Touraine.

XVII. Poitiers

The road is uneventful till you come to Montbazon, a charming little town on the Indre, with a square block of a castle dominating it, which in its turn is dominated by a figure of the Madonna. One sees these commanding statues often in France, the two most famous being, I suppose, those at Le Puy on the rock, and at Marseilles, on the spire of that church which is at once a comfort to the sinner and a beacon to mariners.

To what extent, I wonder, do these holy statues influence; or do they become merely objects of habit, as much a part of the landscape as the trees and the roads? The French are not imaginative; but imaginative things have been done in France, and these benign figures, signifying so much of sweetness and tenderness, poised in mid-air, surely owe their existence to some one with more than the ordinary material mind.

On the next day lunch was at a poor hotel at the top of a steep street in Poitiers, where if I had antedated my visit by nearly four centuries I should have been on English soil. Shade of Edward the Black Prince! I did so little exploring that I came upon no relic of Diane de Poitiers, and so must retain as my most vivid impression of that powerful lady the naïve

portrait of her at Chantilly, taking her breakfast in her bath.

After Poitiers, Angoulême, also massed on a high bank, with a Romanesque church on the summit and brandy merchants in its streets. For the Charente is contiguous, where the best Cognac is distilled; and at the Chapon Fin in Bordeaux, that famous ancient restaurant, I saw later in the day, in the middle of the room, on a table which is almost an altar, two massive bottles, isolated in ceremonial state, one containing the best Cognac and the other the best Armagnac, a rival beverage of heroes. But before Bordeaux could be attained we had to cross that wonderful bridge, at a dizzy height, over the Dordogne, at Libourne.

XVIII. The Médoc

Bordeaux I have never liked, and it is associated in my mind with continuous bad weather. On this last visit, however, the sun shone, and the shipping in the Garonne exerted its punctual spell.

When I was there for a fortnight some years ago the daily excitement was to see the bore creep up from the Atlantic at the turn of the tide. Sometimes it was a foot high, and you knew of its approach by the restlessness of the masts down stream. On one afternoon, I remember, it was so urgent as to snap cable after cable with a loud report and hustle and tumble the great vessels about like corks.

But on this occasion I missed it, and my latest memories of Bordeaux are chiefly of eating downstairs

in the Chapon Fin, and eating very well, and then of being eaten by mosquitoes upstairs later in the night. They were my first mosquitoes on this journey, and the fear they implanted never left me. It was not, however, till I reached Montpellier that I bought the many yards of netting under which, bride-like, I was to repose in security. In vain did they sound their last trumps after that. I heard them, it is true: nothing is so certain to wake me; but I listened without tears.

From Bordeaux I made a tour of the Médoc district, incited thereto by that best of books, the Wine List of the Chapon Fin. Since champagne and whisky-and-soda drove claret from restaurants, our own wine lists have become very dull; but at the Chapon Fin the waiter opens at the "Bordeaux Rouge" section, where in London his confrères use every artifice to induce you to order yellow liquids at a shilling a sparkle. Of Bordeaux Rouge there are many pages in the Chapon Fin Wine List, and all are poetry.

My choice at dinner had been a Pape Clément, and how thrilling it was the next morning to see the words "Pape Clément" over the gates of a vineyard a mile or so outside the city! That was the first vineyard of many. Later in the day we come to some of the real châteaux, of which the Château Beycheville remains in the mind as the most imposing.

The grapes were being picked by little companies of villagers, here, there and everywhere, while we continually met or overtook carts containing barrels of grapes on their way to the presses. On the railway journey from London to Folkestone, when passing the Kentish

hop gardens full of Whitechapel pickers, I had remarked the dinginess of their clothes. How different from the grape pickers of France! I had thought. But I was wrong. The grape pickers are dingy too, no bright hues being present. If I had thought longer I should have remembered that black is the colour of France. Amusing that the typical figure of that country in so many people's imagination is a saucy girl with little or nothing on, whereas in reality it is an old woman in mourning.

Albert's ingratiating smile unlocked a wine-press—that of a well-known and honoured vintage—and I watched half a dozen men with purple naked feet splashing about as they swept the débris of stalks into another huge receptacle for further squeezing, the liquor that results being, I understand, the peasants' special tipple. As for the premier cru of 1924, I listened to it "working" in the mighty vats, and I hope I shall live to taste some when its time arrives.

Albert took me as far—vineyards, vineyards all the way—as Pauillac, a sleepy little town with a wine quay on the bank of the Garonne, and then we turned back. Had we gone a little farther we should have come to Château Lafite itself, where the choicest grapes are grown, and then to St. Estèphe, to whose juices I resorted for restoration in every hotel in France at which, after my extravagances at the Chapon Fin, I stayed. But the sun was sinking and we still had a long way to go through the Landes to reach Arcachon.

XIX. Arcachon

Let me say at once that the Landes, both north of Arcachon and south of it, were a disappointment because not one single pair of stilts did I see, not one habitation on posts among the waters. As long as I can remember—I expect the impression dates from reading that most delightful book of instruction *Near Home*—I have had visions of the inhabitants of a curious aqueous district of France called the Landes, moving about the floods on legs like a stork's. Well, we covered altogether, in this vast region, many hundreds of kilometres, but all the water that was visible was contained within the borders of well-organized lakes. Since *Near Home* was written—and I wonder if that, and its even more fascinating companion volume, *Far Off*, are still such joy to the young as they were to me? —since *Near Home* was written, the indomitable French engineer has been busy; drainage has done its work, and instead of water you now find pine forests stretching for countless miles with a little tin can tied to every trunk.

The last time I was in a country of trees with cups attached to them it was when I was in the Straits Settlements. Then the trunks were yielding rubber; in the Landes they yield the sticky gum without which there would, I suppose, be no string music and no oil painting: no Kreislers and no William Orpens; for from this exudation we get resin for the violinists' strings and turpentine for the artists' palette.

On any drive south of Arcachon towards Bayonne

one passes also through more heather than, it would seem, Scotland possesses, but with no Lauder to laud it. Now and then among the turpentine trees, on the edge of the road, is a line of cork trees, stripped to a man's height and anointed with some dark preservative, with here and there a dead one with long pathetic fingers stretched imploringly out. The fir may rule hereabouts, but, of course, the real tree of France is that which also dominates London—the plane.

I reached Arcachon too late in the season to see it at its best, but I saw enough to want to go again. For children it is an absolute paradise, and I was struck by the fact that on the sands and in the water—if only there—the French child and the English child are on an equality of high spirits and joyful adventurousness. At Arcachon there is always sand and always a calm warm shallow sea; and, so far as I could observe, the many boats are practically communal. At any rate I saw no one ever exercising any authoritative proprietary rights. The one which I hired cost ten francs a day, ten francs being then a little under two shillings; but I shall always be saddened by the thought that, with a little enterprise, I could probably have had it for nothing.

The sea at Arcachon is almost land-locked, in the manner of Southampton Water, and little steamers make the round of it all day long, their farthest point being Cap Ferret. In the midst are islands, one inhabited by fishermen and the others by birds. The town itself is mostly villas and summer bungalows, with a few hotels and more than a few candy and patisserie shops.

There is also a casino, where the rank and file risk their francs at Boule, while the more reckless, after displaying their passports and obtaining the necessary permission from the Government official in attendance, may adventure upon Baccarat.

But the place as a whole is exceedingly simple and jolly and not in the least in competition with the fashionable and frivolous resorts of the northern French coast. Unlike these too, Arcachon has a winter season, when the hotels and villas a little inland among the pinewoods, as at Bournemouth in England, fill up and lungs are healed. At the time of my visit the builders were feverishly busy in developing a forest suburb called Pyla, mainly in the interests of poitrinaires.

Arcachon's other attraction, in addition of course to cinemas and musical cafés, is its Aquarium, which promises "Poissons vivants" all day, and "Repas de Poisson" from 2 to 4. All the fish have been caught in the bassin, as the inlet is called, and all have the beauty that fish cannot escape. I remember with most clearness a tank of little sea-horses with their delicate filagree fins rippling down their backs.

Arcachon and its vicinity have the sharpest contrast in costume that I ever saw, for the garb of the true tripper who walks on the sands or rows in boats or sits on the pier consists of scarlet trousers, blue shirt and a white hat, a choice influenced possibly by his country's flag; whereas in the neighbouring fields and villages the women are in black with black sunbonnets.

And all this while I have said not a word as to Arcachon's greatest merit, Arcachon's first title to

fame: its oysters. The oysters of Arcachon many good French judges put before all the others, Marennes or Belons, although you seldom see them in Paris restaurants. This particular variety of mollusc dwells in a corrugated rugged stronghold shaped like a prize-fighter's ear, the deep shell having more briny juice in it than any other that I have met with. In England there is a lamentable tendency to serve the oyster on the shallow shell and thus permit all its moisture to escape. We also sever it from its abode—and with a steel knife; a horrible barbarity contrary to all sound gustation. We in England also are asked by restaurateurs (themselves possibly the victims of a fishmongers' ring) to pay sixpence each for miserable little creatures that too often resemble in taste (and also in size) nothing so much as bad farthings. At Arcachon I got them, fresh and plump and exquisite, at four francs a dozen, and no doubt outside the hotel I should have been asked less.

One thing more: at Arcachon I found a shopkeeper named Ulysse Mule.

XX. Ingres

It was to see the Ingres museum that I included Montauban in the route, for the town itself did not promise any great interest; although the old bridge is fine, and the arcaded market place is one of the most foreign spots in the whole country and curiously like the market-place at San Sebastian, which used to be the old bull-fight arena. The Montauban arcade is

double, and in the middle of the square, where the marketers chaffer under blue umbrellas, the stalls are glorious with the great golden pumpkins of France, which everywhere had been lying about in the fields awaiting Mr. Brangwyn's sumptuous brush. I had thought of Mr. Brangwyn before I found, in the museum, representations by him, a master of bridges, of both the old Montauban bridge and the new.

Besides these fine bridges, Montauban has a store of attractive old buildings, constructed of tiny red bricks with little towers and turrets to give them an added charm; but its most noticeable peculiarity is its pavement of black and white pebbles inlaid in patterns.

For Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) I have always had admiration and respect rather than affection. His stern impeccability has a coldness that repels; his want of any richness or subtlety as a colourist is discouraging too. But the sensitiveness of which that marvellously precise hand was capable when it held the pencil that created some of his little portraits atones for all. At Montauban, although there are very few paintings, there are drawings and studies in great numbers; but his most charming side is not represented. One can follow the scientific growth of a sincere uncompromising master; but for the great mature accomplishment one must go elsewhere, chiefly to the Louvre, where the "Œdipus" hangs, and the "Source," the "Bain Turc," the "Odalisque," the many portraits and the "Apotheosis of Homer." Montauban has principally the seed: not the flower.

Perhaps the principal treasure of the museum in the

eyes of its curator is the work left by Ingres to the town painted when the master was eighty-two, representing the boy Jesus confounding the Doctors in the Temple. It was not an easy subject to treat and Ingres does not convince. The Doctors have thrown away their books and are exchanging nonplussed glances; but the intellectual superiority of the Child would not be guessed at, if one did not know the story.

Although the museum has only this late work, drawings and studies, and a few copies, in the cathedral is the famous picture "Le Voeu de Louis XIII," painted in 1824, which turned public opinion in Ingres' favour and put an end to the long period of privation (he was born in Montauban forty-four years before) which he had been suffering. Thenceforward he was recognized as a great painter, and when Horace Vernet died and left the post vacant, Ingres settled down to honourable ease, although never idleness, as the Director of the French School of Art at Rome. He lived to be eighty-seven and retained his faculties to the last. The peculiarity of his "Voeu de Louis XIII" is its incorporation of a detail from the Sistine Madonna of Raphael, who was always his favourite master. It hangs in the Old Sacristy of the cathedral, the plainest and most forbidding church in France.

The Ingres museum is a noble tribute to the man, and hero-worship could not be carried much farther than in the little room where his personal effects are gathered in glass cases: his copy of the *Iliad*, his palettes and brushes, his spectacles, and his violin, for he began his career as a musician, and even when only a

boy brought down the theatre at Toulouse by his playing in a concerto.

XXI. Carcassonne

Between Montauban and Toulouse a new crop appears in the fields—a large flat-leaved plant which I discovered to be tobacco. But what becomes of it I did not ascertain. Could I have bought it for my pipe? I made no effort, anyway. There are limits to human courage.

Of Toulouse I have no very happy impressions, and some miserable ones, for the mosquitoes that I had escaped at Montauban were mobilized there in strength. Let me warn visitors to this town (which is full of pretty but very small girls) against the hotels and restaurants recommended by Baedeker, and advise them to go to the Regina, which is good. It was a pleasure to leave Toulouse and start early the next morning on the golden journey to Carcassonne.

We reached that incredible hill fortress on a bitterly cold morning a whole hour before lunch was ready in the only hotel; and "only hotels" cannot be hurried. I say incredible because Carcassonne is of course too good to be true. How can there exist in such a state of preservation so perfect a fulfilment of all our dreams of romance?—a mediæval castle of such dimensions obeying all the rules of position and fortification? For there it is, above you, on its rock, with the walls of the right thickness, pierced by the right gateways and surmounted by the right towers—fifty-four of them!—

with all the proper draw-bridges and battlements and crenellations and machicolations and turrets and extinguishers: every detail exact and in a state of almost perfect preservation.

Were it not for certain evidences of authentic solidity you would say that Carcassonne had been built for a film; and as a matter of fact a film, one of the inhabitants told me, has recently been taken there; and very glad they all were, she added, when it was finished!

The inhabitants, I may say, came rather as a shock, for one does not expect streets of residences within such walls; but Carcassonne being now a tourists' paradise, there must of necessity be shops for souvenirs and picture-postcards, and shops for antiquities, while the hotel is of the most modern, with a wine list whose prices reach an altitude far beyond that of any other eating place in France. It is, however, a good hotel and lunch when it came was excellent, if costly. I ate it at a table next to the one at which three American ladies were greeting three other American ladies whom they had not seen in years; and you can guess what that means in volubility. It was the chauffeur of one of these two parties, I fancy, who afterwards, just outside the chapel, offered to sell me a second-hand car: "enclosed drive, perfect for a doctor." So you see that modernity has successfully stormed this stronghold of the past.

The chapel is charming—l'Eglise des Saints Nazaire et Celse—with its gay coloured figures of saints—St. Michael and St. Joan of Arc—and its white walls and rich glass. I was led to it by two small boys who en-

couraged my steps by continually remarking "Good-bye."

Two things I remember about the Carcassonne hotel, besides the welcomeness of its shelter and refreshment and the dimensions of the bill, and those are the dish of hot boiled chestnuts at the end of the meal and the little jar of the delicate scented honey of Narbonne which the waiter gave(!) me.

XXII. The Turkeys

From Carcassonne to Montpellier the road runs through Béziers, which appears to be the very centre of the wine industry of this part of France. There had been wine presses at work in all the villages, and carts containing grapes we had continually met or passed; but at Béziers seem to be gathered together all the barrels of the south. They are piled high in the streets, and piled high beside the railway lines, waiting to be carried away to all the cellars of the world, except of course American ones. Barrels and bottles, bottles and barrels, where are they all made? I saw no factory of either.

In the fields the goose-girl (who is usually a very old woman or very old man) with flocks of soft grey waddlers now became a common sight, for foie gras is cultivated hereabouts; and companies of black turkeys are frequent too. Black turkeys! At these simple words my pen falters, for it was not far from Montpellier that, suddenly, without any foreboding of calamity, a dozen of those fine but foolish creatures began to cross

the road at a moment when the car was doing its forty to fifty miles an hour; and there was nothing for it but to go through them. The following exercise in laconics then occurred.

Albert. "How many?"

Normally humane author (looking back). "Four."

We were nighest the sea, since Archachon, at Agde, but the sea was no longer the Atlantic ocean but the tideless Mediterranean. Agde, like Arcachon, is on an inlet, and I watched a haul of fish being transferred from one of the little sailing boats to the quay, while the old women of Agde bargained and bought. Civilization may do its worst, but some things can never be changed and never will, and chief among these is our interest in a haul of fish. And save for some trifling differences of costume (and very likely not any difference at all) these old women were precisely the same old women who were bargaining at Agde for fish a thousand years ago.

XXIII. Montpellier

I think of Montpellier as one of the pleasantest towns in France. It stands high, with mountains all about—the Pyrennes and the Cevennes—and keen invigorating air blowing from their summits; it has a cheerful populace, prosperous shops and buildings, two public gardens better kept than any that I saw in France, and, I therefore deduce, a very good Mayor. The best of these public gardens is the famous Peyron, which has an immense view of the Pyrenees turning purple at eve, and, at its western extremity, a most charmingly pro-

portioned hexagonal pavilion, a Château d'Eau, which forms the terminal point of the stately aqueduct of St. Clément.

Another recollection that I find I have carried away from Montpellier is of a sweetmeat which, as far as I know, is peculiar to that town. It is made in the form of a heart and it blends two of the most alluring flavours that exist, quince and honey.

Sitting in one of the large friendly cafés of Montpellier, where a band played and each table had its gaming party, I thought again of the frugality of these people, and the modesty of their demands upon life. The good sense of it all, too! No rapacity on the part of the proprietors, no extravagance expected or given. They were at liberty to spend the whole evening, listening to the music, talking or playing cards or dominoes, for the price of a single cup of coffee. And all together, not as in our English way segregated, the men standing in public-houses, the women lonely at home.

Watching these French parties when the time came to pay, I noticed again how carefully the respective liabilities are worked out, to be individually discharged; for in France the rule each one for himself is practised far more than with us. Not merely with regard to payments such as these, but in life itself. We English often come to realize it, but in France it is taught, and the French youth has thus fewer bitter disillusionments ahead of him. In an estaminet the workman pays for his own drink and smokes his own cigarette, no matter how friendly he may be with his companion. The War,

with its jostling of Allies, introduced the English and American habit of standing treat; but only the young French officers with a touch of Anglomania adopted it, and I should guess that even they have forgotten it by now.

The Montpellier picture gallery, founded by the portrait painter François Xavier Pascal Fabre (1766-1837) is one of the most attractive in provincial France. It has not too much—or not much too much—it has both good pictures and interesting pictures and the catalogue is a model. The principal treasure is the portrait of a young man possibly by Raphael; the most popular work is a very pretty Carlo Dolci, "Madonna and Child"; the biggest surprise is to find Sir Joshua Reynolds' "Infant Samuel." There is as good a Terburg as you could ask for, a perfect Paul Potter, a portrait of Byron by Géricault, and a charming draped figure in marble by Houdon.

Since Fabre's time the collection has been continuously enriched and some of the moderns are well represented, while Montpellier's own artistic sons, such as Fabre himself and Cabanal, have much honour. A special feature is the number of portraits of the great artists of the middle of the last century, either by themselves or their confrères, such as Delacroix and Courbet. But even more noticeable is the number of representations of a certain delicate refined face, with long nose, cavernous eyes and a silky pointed fair beard. This languid intriguing countenance must occur half a dozen times in the same room; sometimes in portraits, sometimes in figure subjects, as when Delacroix with

knapsack and staff meets its owner in the desert, much like Stanley and Livingstone, and again when Glaize paints him in his cabinet in a blue dressing-gown and striped trousers, for all the world like the decadent brother in Trollope's *Barchester Towers*. This much-painted gentleman was Monsieur Bruyas, connoisseur and friend of artists, who lived in Montpellier and left his collection to the town.

XXIV. Aigues Mortes

The day's run from Montpellier to Marseilles was over the flats and among the estuaries of the Rhone—very like Essex. France has few cars on its roads, and hereabouts none at all. Indeed, the infrequency of cars was a continual surprise to me. Paris has so many that the preservation of one's life there is a perpetual miracle; but directly you leave Paris they diminish in number and in the wilder parts there are none. A few camions, but almost no one touring for pleasure. This is one difference between France and England, where cars are numerous everywhere; another is that in France you seldom see a woman driving—in all my journeys I saw but two—whereas in England they are steadily increasing in number, if not in ability to keep a line.

I said of Carcassonne that it was a surprise to find it inhabited by anyone, even picture-postcard sellers; but you are prepared for the busy streets of Aigues Mortes, although they are enclosed by ramparts no less solid, picturesque and obsolete. Being so remote, Aigues Mortes (which means dead waters) has kept

more of its character. You come to it by causeways amid the salt lagoons round an isolated gate tower seven hundred years old—standing solitary as a lighthouse. Then more causeway, and the town itself, just beyond the basin of a canal packed with wine barges, the railway station and a modern house or two and restaurant. Having passed these you are confronted by a mediæval fortress still intact, with its fifteen towers and ten gates, and, as at Carcassonne, all the fitting romantic detail. The moat has gone; otherwise it is almost as Philip the Bold left it, in the thirteenth century. Philip was the son of Louis IX, or Saint Louis, who sailed from Aigues Mortes for the Crusades first in 1248 and again in 1270, and who stands to the town as Joan of Arc to Orleans. His statue is in the market-place, and in the church is an oil painting of his embarkation.

The three chief sights of Aigues Mortes—next to itself, which is the real sight—are St. Louis' Tour de Constance, which during its long life has been a fortress and Huguenot prison and now serves as a look-out station; the Tour des Bourguignons, where a company of invading Burgundians were thrown to die in the fifteenth century; and the beautiful old house built on an arcade in the street named after Gambetta. St. Louis and Gambetta—thus do the centuries link!

XXV. Les Saintes Maries

Between Aigues Mortes and Les Saintes Maries are twenty miles of marsh and lake, and here is the actual

sea, which both at Agde and Aigues Mortes was still distant. For years and years I have had Les Saintes Maries hovering before me as one of those Promised Places which must be seen. Every one has them. I had heard so much of its charm, of its ancient church, of its gipsy pilgrims, of its lovely situation on the Mediterranean's shores.

But I had better have fostered the dream, for the reality was disappointing. The town is dirty, the plage (for bathers from Arles and Nîmes come here in the summer) is squalid, and the food at the best hotel ("cuisine soignée") was uneatable, partly because it was so poor, and partly because the flies had preceded me. I must admit, however, to entertainment of another kind, for during the whole of the meal I could watch, through the window, the bulky landlord, in Provençal slippers, with his gun, stalking a little bird. Again and again when he was almost near enough to blow it to atoms (as must have resulted) some interruption occurred. At the end of lunch he was crouching behind a tree only a tenth of his own girth.

Les Saintes Maries, as all the world knows, takes its name from the circumstance that Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of James, and Mary of Bethany, accompanied by Lazarus, Martha and St. Maximus, landed here in the first century A.D. Mary of Bethany and Mary the mother of James remained at Les Saintes Maries and were buried there—you may see their relics in the church—but the Magdalen moved on to Marseilles, where she found a cave to dwell in, now called La Sainte Baume, where angels fed her with manna.

St. Maximus, after a life devoted to preaching Christianity to the Provençals, was buried in the little town named after him, with the lovely church, near Gardanne. Lazarus seems to have ministered in Marseilles, while Martha settled in Tarascon, dividing her time between converting the Tartarins and slaying a local dragon.

There remains to be mentioned another member of this little party of Christians, who, though the humblest of them in station, has since her death at Les Saintes Maries—she is buried in the crypt—exerted the strangest if not the strongest influence. This is Sarah, the handmaid of the travellers, who being, according to the legend, an Egyptian, has been adopted by the Egyptians of France—in other words the gipsies—as their patron saint. (How difficult to think of our own caravan dwellers with such a figure for reverence before their eyes!) The two Marys are honoured by thousands of ordinary pilgrims on May 24 and 25 every year, when the church is an object of veneration; Sarah receives her tattered devotees at the end of each October. All over France I had come upon little knots of these "Nomads" and upon notice-boards referring to them: either "defending" ground from their encampments or signifying that they might pitch their tents there. After visiting Les Saintes Maries I looked at every gipsy with a new interest.

XXVI. Marseilles

I wish I could have stayed longer in Marseilles, for it is a city that has always fascinated me and not less

so since I read Conrad's romance *The Arrow of Gold*, with its analysis of the complex charm of the Cannebière. I was there long enough to loiter on the terrace of the perfectly-placed Restaurant de la Réserve, looking out over the bay; to resist (having learned my lesson eight years ago) the blandishments of the steamer tout who promises a visit to the Château d'If but only takes you near it; to sit again on the pavement of the Cannebière (which is the next best thing to sitting outside the Café de la Paix in Paris); to dine again at Isnard's (but, alas! bouillabaisse was being served only at lunch); and next morning to renew my acquaintance with the versatility of the local Michael Angelo, the vigorous if not very subtle Pierre Puget, and to see again the beautiful frescoes by Puvis de Chavannes. I have been in many cities that are actually more populous than Marseilles, but none so gives the impression of seething; and none, as Conrad says, is more cosmopolitan.

The contrast between Marseilles and its almost immediate neighbourhood to the east is extraordinary; in the whole of France I saw no wilder and more desolate region than that waste of rocks on the road to Cassis. Save for the chasseurs and their dogs (as usual, wholly out of control) there were no signs of life, and had it not been Sunday morning there would not have been even those. I saw not a bird of any species. Once a chasseur discharged his piece, but he made no effort to follow it up.

Cassis, where the road hits the sea, is the first of a series of little old harbours, now transformed to bath-

ing resorts, along the coast. La Ciotat comes next, and then Bandol, which struck me as charming and well worth the attention of English birds of passage flying south for the winter.

As we neared Toulon, as I have said earlier, the game of boules set in, all among the traffic, and even between the tram lines, while in the centre of Toulon itself huge crowds were gathered about the contests in a great open space, every other man being from a French battleship, with a little round button a-top. But at Toulon we did not stop; hurrying on to Hyères for lunch.

My idea had been to spend a day or so on the island of Porquerolles, but it was the end of the season (although not yet the beginning of the season at Hyères) and the regular service of steamers and motor-boats had stopped. Instead, we pushed on to Cannes by a road which brought us out at the Gulf of Fréjus, where there are now miles of blackened wilderness, the relics of a fire a year or so ago.

Fréjus had two articles of interest: one for Albert, a petrol shop, and one for me, a Roman amphitheatre. And at St. Raphael, by the statue of Rodin, there was the sea again, which we kept beside us all the way to Cannes, and in the warmth of which I was to revel every morning for a week. It was indeed for this that I had come so far.

XXVII. The Tables

The sea in the mornings; in the afternoons Monte Carlo, by way of one of the three marvellous roads, of which Napoleon's Grande Corniche is still the finest.

There may be more exciting highways than this marvel of engineering, but I have not travelled on them. And again the thought constantly recurred: How could our ancestors in the days before steam, apart altogether from the days before petrol, face the Continental tour? Yet they did, and apparently without fear or misgiving. What leisure, what patience, what fortitude, must have been theirs. Perhaps, above all, what curiosity!

It was too early for any of the great Riviera resorts. Cannes had but two hotels open; at Nice the huge bizarre Negresco made a show of welcoming the stranger, but within its imposing portals there were twenty hammering workmen to every guest; at Monte Carlo the more famous hotels and restaurants were closed, and in the harbour was but one ordinary yacht and one four-masted schooner yacht, while pigeons might fly without fear. None the less, each afternoon I had to wait for an hour before I could get a seat at any of the tables. The best and most notorious gamblers may have been absent—no Grand Dukes, none of the faces whom we identify by reading from left to right (or is it from right to wrong?): but people of another kind thronged the place just the same, many of them English, many of them American, and all apparently happy.

I heard no suicidal pistol report; I saw no one being provided with a second class ticket to his home, as in the stories. But everything else was true to tradition, and the procession of croupiers and table controllers, with their sleepless eyes and white faces, their black clothes and dyed hair, corresponded in every detail with

my anticipations; while also, being always a poor hand at protecting my property, I was in the accepted fashion twice the victim of rapacious old women who grabbed my winnings as their own.

I make no claim to being a good gambler. To lose at the tables or on the turf always strikes me as the least satisfactory way of being parted from one's money. Perhaps I can best explain my mental position if I say that although I consistently won at Trente-et-un, I was much more amused by not winning at Roulette.

XXVIII. Fragonard and Grasse

Grasse clings to the sides of the mountains some ten miles north of Cannes, a prosperous gay town, clean and white and almost more than healthy—hardy. Life there is like hors d'œuvres to the Alpine banquet. This cluster of white habitations and aromatic factories I had always wanted to visit, both for itself and for the sake of that adorable artist whose name seems to have been invented to describe a painter occupied solely with daintiness and charm and born in a town famous for its scent—Fragonard. The words Fragonard and fragrant have a close kinship and they are in communion in Grasse, where, on my visit, the surrounding gardens were filled with jasmine blooms, and women and children picking them on every side.

Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806) has his statue —the French never allow a distinguished son of France to lack that—and his Musée too: a very attractive mansion which once belonged to the Marquise de Sabran,

the sister of Mirabeau, and was given to the town in 1918. It has been sparsely but tastefully furnished as a record of what kind of houses the old Provençal nobility lived in, and also as a tribute to the memory of the Grasse painter and his family.

There is too little of Fragonard in this pretty house, and nothing to set beside his most famous works: a few drawings, such as a child's head, an old lady, a "Jardinière," and his sisters in sepia; an oil painting of a nymph startled while bathing. Where would Fragonard be but for nymphs ready to be startled while bathing? Where would Boucher be, and all those other sportive scholars of the École Galante?

But Fragonard is the most cherishable. He may not have drawn like Watteau or painted with the dashing decision of Boucher, but he brought a bloom of his own and he mixed with his naughty sophistication the most charming hints of innocence.

Among the other articles of interest, chief is the bust of la Marquise de Sabran by Houdon. Some of the furniture is perfect, and the visitor must not forget to see the kitchen downstairs.

I wanted to lunch at Grasse, but Albert was too strong and insisted on driving on to a favourite summer resort, the Pont du Loup, a little bridge with restaurants on each side of it, in a deep gorge in which every inch has some vulpine association. As it happened, Albert was right; but the experiment was risky as the hour was very late. In France it is too easy to postpone lunch until it has lost all savour. Afterwards Albert whirled his car up and up among

the rocks to the tiny hamlet of Gourdon, which is perched on the very tip of one of those stony peaks, with astonishing views of the wolf's valley beneath, the Riviera coast and, on fine days, a distant blur called Corsica. Gourdon consists of a church, a huddle of houses, a number of bird cages with birds twittering in them, a villa in its own grounds now occupied by an American lady, and a War memorial—a relief of a dead soldier under a cross—recording the names of seven "héros." In the winter it is so cold here that the whole population retires to a reserve village below.

Albert, who is on his own ground in the Riviera, where he drives parties every winter, with Nice as his headquarters, then insisted on a visit to a scent factory, where he no doubt received a commission on my extravagance. Had I been wise, I should not have given way, for scents—and, even more, scent-bottles—are irresistible; and these seemed to me to be far too dear. But the new flacons can be so pretty and the new names so seductive. "Carino" for example, which "revèle indéfiniment à celles qui l'ont employé son charme peu commun," the "souvenir" of which is "inoubliable."

XXIX. The Mountain Lunch

The first heavy snow of the autumn ruined my northern journey from Cannes. The plan was to reach Grenoble by way of Barcelonnette and La Grave, all among the French Alps with the Swiss

giants not too far away; and everything was going splendidly until we were turned back, just before the first real pass.

The road is by way of Grasse, and immediately Grasse is left behind it becomes wild and steep. Immense valleys of rocks, with almost no sign of life between village and village; rivers that were beginning to be torrents; and in the distance snow-clad peaks. The road so continually turns that in actual crow-flight distance very little progress is made, and a compass would behave like a dervish; but the mileage is heavy. Our first stop was at an inn in the ancient and bitterly cold town of Castellane, where Albert and I drank coffee and the car petrol. This grim little place is in the shadow of a perpendicular rock soaring high into the sky, with the Madonna and Child on its edge blessing the Castellanians, who, I am sure, need it.

Then beside the river Verdon, through St. André de Méouilles and Thorème and Colmers, hoping that each of these villages might provide an acceptable lunching place. In vain. But at Allos to postpone eating any longer was an impossibility. The town was far from inviting; the two or three inns gave no sign of welcome; they were very old and very much in decay. But the keen air was making me ravenous and I sent Albert into the Hôtel du Midi—choosing that in preference to the Pascal, without any reason —to forage. The gods were good! He came back with the news that there was an excellent lunch in preparation; and he was eminently right.

You never can tell! Within this tottering building, with its uneven stairs and crooked passages, I had the best lunch I had eaten in France. It began with sausage and sardines, went on with a trout from the Verdon, roast chicken, beef stewed to perfection, some excellent local cheese and a large pat of butter. Butter in France usually has to be asked for, but, despite the high altitude, this pat automatically arrived. And with the food I had the company of my trusted friend St. Estèphe. Not bad for a peculiarly dirty mountain village! Albert, at a neighbouring table, much nearer the stove in the middle of the room, was having the same meal at, I suppose, half the price; but mine was cheap enough.

But perhaps even more surprising than the excellence of this Allos lunch, in the crazy building, was the choice of pictures on the walls, for all were coloured lithographs from the deft but shameless hand of M. Georges Rédon, who for long has been retained by the controllers of the Café de Paris and the Abbaye and Fouquet's Bar and Armenonville to make amusingly improper designs for their menu cards. In Paris M. Rédon is appropriate enough; but in this Alpine shelter he seemed out of place indeed. And yet during the War did not the coloured supplements from Kirchner's voluptuous pencil do more to hearten our soldiers in their dug-outs and help them to win it, than all the solemn oratory of statesmen or anxious rhetoric of editors? So it is said, and I see no reason to disbelieve it.

It was just as we were leaving Allos that a new

guest entered with the news that the pass was blocked. The day was so fine that Albert refused to believe it, and on we rushed, higher and higher, for a few miles, the snow deepening ominously as we progressed, until at a point just before the real ascent begins some road-menders, whose word had to be accepted, turned us back. It was humiliating, but there was no other way. And so we returned as far as St. André, to which I thought to have bade farewell for ever, and there branched off down another valley to reach Digue, and from Digue, beside the river Bléone, Malijai, where a road runs north, beside the river Durance. Our objective was still Grenoble, but by a timid approach.

XXX. Sisteron the Sad

My advice to anyone in these parts is to arrange the time-table so that it is not necessary to stop at Sisteron. A picturesque town it may be, set on the west bank of the Durance close to its juncture with the Buech, and it lies under a castle on a high rock; but its best inn could hardly be worse. It promised everything: "cuisine de premier ordre" and all the rest of it; and fulfilled nothing.

I was lucky to have eaten so well at Allos, but that was hours ago, and Albert had been merciless over the rough roads. Moreover I added to my hunger by climbing to the castle, which is now closed, but seems to have been last used during the War as a prison. Conical hills with ruined castles on their apex are frequent in this district, but there is nothing so fine as

the Sisteron fortress, which is straight out of Perrault.

The river here, though narrow, is too wide to ford, too cold to swim, too swift to navigate, and there is no bridge for many miles. Facing Sisteron on the opposite bank is a village, and as I leant over the parapet and looked across I thought what a curious time would a new Hero and Leander have, if Hero lived here and Leander there: almost, if not quite, within sound of each other's voices, within easy sight of each other's faces, yet sundered completely unless they took to the long, long trail.

From Sisteron to Grenoble the road again winds over very high ground, thick with fruit trees, among them many heavily laden quinces and pears, looking in their rich gold very strange amid the snow. We could have gone through Gap and St. Bonnet, but Albert chose the route by way of Ribiers and Serre and Aspres, and by starting early we were at Grenoble for lunch.

XXXI. Grenoble

Grenoble is not itself high, or at any rate relatively is not, but you go there in order to visit the heights. At the end of every street you see a snowy peak. It is the paradise of the estivant, and I wonder how many of my readers know what an estivant is? I discovered, what I ought perhaps to have divined, that an estivant is one who spends the summer among the mountains.

Besides its distinction as the key of the French

Alps, with views of Mont Blanc from various points, Grenoble has fame for its gloves. It struck me as a delightful town and very healthy, and the old fortress on the hill-side beyond the river is nobly placed. At Cannes and along the Riviera, the season, as I have said, was about to break out; here it was over, and "Grenoble for the Grenoblois" had become again the rule.

In its art gallery are a few good pictures, among them a set of four large Zurbarans, which come as a surprise, and a Canaletto Venetian scene which in depicting the Grand Canal seems to have achieved the essence of antithesis to this Alpine resort. I was the only person in the place except one weary attendant, and it seemed to be almost with a touch of triumph that when I asked for a catalogue he replied, "N'y a plus." The custodians of picture galleries and museums in France can be the most dejected, the least animated and inspiring, of men; but this one excelled all. Of what other and happier life are they dreaming?

XXXII. Lyon

From Grenoble to Lyon the road is comparatively dull. The glistening peaks recede and gradually disappear; vineyards and meadows come back, and even cattle—a rare sight in France—are seen. At Vienne we touched the Rhône, which I saw last debouching near Aigues Mortes; at Lyon we found it again, cutting the great bustling city in two.

Lyon I remember for its spacious picture gallery,

larger I believe than our National Gallery, its intolerably noisy streets, its cold and steady rain, its vastness, its first-class restaurant called the Carillon and a marionette performance at the Casino. The picture gallery has little of the finest, but it has much that ought to be seen, and I was interested in discovering how many famous French painters were Lyonnais. Among those new to me was Louis Carrand, a very sensitive pleinairiste. The most spirited Meissonier I have seen—three men galloping over the sands—hangs there.

I have still another memory of Lyon and that is of a street musician. France has few performers to compare with our myriad Ex-service bands, organ grinders, negroes, street singers and the banjoists who play in the doorways of public-houses. In Paris I believe they are forbidden by law; whatever the reason, you rarely see or hear any. But in Lyon, just outside my hotel, there was an old man on a tricycle who blew a whistle pipe for an hour and blew it very well. That in itself is nothing; but what fixed him in my mind was his means of transit, for having collected as much money as seemed probable, he dashed off across the busy lawless street, which has tram lines down the middle of it and constant traffic, not propelled by his pedals but drawn swiftly by a great dog. This masterful old man was my only street performer, if I except the drumming sergeant de ville in a little town in the Médoc who beat upon his instrument to ensure attention to his proclamation, just as an English crier rings his bell.

XXXIII. Clermont-Ferrand

From the Rhône we went again to the Loire, which I had last seen at Montaubon, crossing it at Feurs, and so to Boen and along a fascinating stream-side road to Thiers. There had been terrific recent rains, so that wherever there was a chance this stream brimmed over into a lake. Thiers, the Sheffield of France, in its outskirts is dreary, but the old town itself, built totteringly beside a series of cascades, is memorable, and not the less so for its unexpectedness.

Perhaps the most curious thing about Clermont-Ferrand, which is half an ancient provincial capital and half new factory chimneys, is the number of bookshops, serious bookshops, which it contains; due possibly to the influence of Pascal, whose statue is one of several there. Clermont-Ferrand struck me as a serious town throughout, not only because of the books and because of the crowd of soldiers that I watched waiting to get into the gallery of the theatre to witness a Victor Hugo drama, but for general reasons. And when I say theatre, I mean theatre. Not cinema palace.

Clermont-Ferrand is a very cold town, but friendly. The cathedral with its twin spires—real twins and not merely brother and sister as at Chartres—stands high on its central hill, with a Madonna and Child on the point of a pinnacle blessing the great valley stretched below. Immediately around the cathedral are the oldest and narrowest streets; and somewhere here is the most congested market I ever struggled through.

Everything that you could need for lunch was displayed, but the most attractive shops and stalls were those given to cheese; and the most attractive cheese, St. Nectaire, is one that you can get rightly only in the neighbourhood of its manufacture; it comes in flavour somewhere between a Port Salut and a Bel Paese.

I merely walked about in the cathedral, but I attended a service in the venerable church of Nôtre-Dame du Port, which, instead of mounting to, you enter by descending a flight of steps, and on my desk at this moment is a little reproduction of the famous black Virgin, whom to revere you must descend still lower, into the crypt.

Clermont-Ferrand has its own busy life irrespective of the outside world, which it supplies with drain pipes and rubber goods. No nonsense about "seasons" here. None the less it has its importance to the tourist in being the nearest large town to the strange Puy de Dôme country, where the volcanoes of France, no longer active but covered with firs and heather, raise their heads. It was to see these monsters, of which the Puy de Dôme is the chief, that I took this road at all.

For a walking tour in France, which shall include really wild country, I should recommend the Puy de Dôme district almost first, for it has everything that the robust and curious can desire, and it would be a simple matter to make Clermont-Ferrand, or, even better, Royat, one's headquarters. There is an inn

on the top of the Puy de Dôme itself for the pilgrims of a night.

XXXIV. The Maid of Orleans

Orleans is exactly the spacious and dignified city that I expected it to be, with its high grey roofs and dormer windows, its white walls and pavé streets. But the cathedral—so very like Nôtre Dame in Paris—was a surprise, so splendid is it, although the windows recording the history of Joan of Arc are inferior. The Maid dominates the whole place. At every turn you are reminded of her, either by statue, picture or postcard, and there is a museum solely in her honour, where every incident in her career, real or legendary, has its record.

In this charming little house, at leisure and very conveniently, one may compare the multitude of representations of this amazing figure which painters and sculptors have imagined. There is also what is called a contemporary likeness, but little can be learned from that. The principle of "one man, one vote," or rather, "one guess," has never been carried farther. In the result we have either the one Joan that our own inner eye discerns, dimly, or the picture or statue which most appeals to us, from the massive field-marshal which Ingres makes of her, to the stern wistful visionary of Puvis de Chavannes, from the dazed peasant of Bastien Lepage to the courageous schoolgirl of Boutet de Monvel. Then again, how different are the sculptors! Some accentuate her simplicity, some her piety, some

her authority; while perhaps in the best known treatment of all, in Fremiet's equestrian group in gold in the Rue de Rivoli, she is a dashing, almost Parisian, queen of Pageant.

Joan of Arc will remain undefined in character as well as in form and feature as long as poetry, romance and the drama play about her astounding story; and here again what a choice of concepts is offered the reader, from the negligible irreverence of Voltaire to the brilliant advocacy of Bernard Shaw, who, in his last and best play, *Saint Joan,* makes her an almost divine figure, or as nearly almost divine as he can endure.

Orleans was ever loyal to the heroine who delivered it from the English, but since her recent canonization she more than ever controls the city, and I must try to be there on May 7 and 8 some year to see the pilgrims in procession and all the other ceremonial; even though, considering the whole story, one might, as an Englishman, feel a little awkward in being in Orleans at all. But French magnanimity to foreigners and even to foes is undefeatable.

VARIETIES

59,654

I WONDER how many people could guess without any assistance what the number at the head of this article signifies. I believe it would be safe even for me to offer a large monetary prize to anyone providing a correct answer.

I have put it to all kinds of persons and they have hazarded ingenious theories.

"I know," said one man instantly: "it's your ticket in the Calcutta Sweep."

"No," I said.

"It's something to do with Reparations," said another.

"No," I said.

"It's too high for a telephone number," said a third man.

"Yes," I said.

"And too low for your income."

I disregarded this remark.

"It might be the number of the hairs of your head," he mused.

I disregarded this too.

"It's the number of marks or crowns or roubles you got for a pound when you were in Germany or Austria or Russia," suggested another.

"No," I said.

"Well, I'm glad it's not," he replied, "because I'm so tired of that kind of talk."

It was then that I began to throw lights.

"It refers to something to eat," I said.

No one was inspired.

"You couldn't guess," I said, "unless you had been abroad."

No response.

"The number," I said, "occurs on a picture postcard."

Still no one had an idea.

"The picture," I went on, "represents an elderly man with whiskers engaged in a culinary occupation."

Their eyes remained dull.

"You," I said, pointing to the man who had been boasting that he knew Paris backwards, "doesn't that tell you?"

"No," he said sulkily.

"Then I will throw more light," I said. "The number was written in by the successor of the elderly man with whiskers, and the card was then presented to me as a souvenir. Does that illumine the darkness? No? Then let me add that the scene is the oldest restaurant in Paris, and that the culinary operation is the slicing of a duck preparatory to crushing the carcass. And now you know. The duck served to me on the occasion of my last visit to the Tour d'Argent was the 59,654th."

"Of course!" they each exclaimed. "How stupid of me!"

And then we fell to the discussion of this famous resort of the epicure and the gourmet, not to mention the gourmand.

You seek the Silver Tower for the flesh of the duck —the best ducks that the fair land of France can produce, served with quintessential sauce extracted from their own bones. Some one is always carving a breast, some one is always turning the handle of a press, some one is always catching the juice, some one is always eating; everybody is always talking.

"It's an amusing place," I said, "and you ought to go there once on every visit to Paris; but it isn't so good as it used to be."

"Nothing in Paris is," said one of the company.

"For one thing," I said, "they are now putting too much lemon in the sauce. For another, they are too noisy. You see, it's a very small room, and it isn't as if your duck—I mean my duck—No. 59,654—was the only one. Far from it. While I am waiting for mine No. 59,653 is having the finishing touches put to it, and they are beginning on No. 59,655 and No. 59,656. That means that four fat men are beating up sauce in four metal dishes over four spirit-lamps all together. The din, even apart from the conversation of the guests, many of whom are strong silent Americans, is deafening. Now, I like to eat quietly. To go to the Tour d'Argent because it was founded in 1582 and has no band, and then to find it like a parrot house, is very disconcerting. No quality of duck can compensate for that."

"The Tour d'Argent," said the man who knew Paris,

"has another point of interest which renders it unique among Paris restaurants—it is always closed on Mondays."

"Why?" asked some one.

"To let the staff consult their aurists," he said.

Americans.—Americans are people who prefer the Continent to their own country, but refuse to learn its languages. It is to Paris that, as a reward, dead Americans go who were good in life; but one can also meet there Americans who must have arrived under false pretences.

Answers.—Continental answers are so difficult to understand that it is prudent never to ask questions.

Bills.—Long and bewildering documents made out in purple ink in which 4s look like 7s and 7s like 4s and 5s like nothing on earth, but which added together can spell bankruptcy.

Billiards on the Continent is less a form of religion than a game. Spectators at matches are allowed to talk. The balls are big and heavy and without any particular shape; the cues are like jumping poles; the tables are small, and there are no pockets. Often there are ninepins in the middle, and anyone who wishes to cut the cloth may do so. There is no such nonsense as a penalty for a miss.

Birds.—Most of the little singing birds on the Continent are seldom seen till they leave the kitchen. In Italy it needs several to make a dish for an adult.

Books.—Continental books used to be much less proper than ours; but we are catching up. They are

not, however, so easy to read as ours. They usually need a dictionary, always need a paper-knife and are never bound in anything but paper. This means that the book-binders have a good time. Continental novels are always in their five hundredth thousand.

Breakfast.—There is no breakfast on the Continent, but Englishmen order two eggs.

Brigands.—These are no longer the picturesque fully-armed ruffians who lurked in woods and lived in caves and held you up to ransom; but they still exist in large numbers, wearing frock-coats or tail-coats and managing hotels.

Cabmen.—Since the introduction of the taximeter, these enemies of Society are less dangerous than they were; but the traveller who cares for peace and quiet still gives them all his small change too.

Channel Crossing.—Now that the three railway systems that convey us to France have combined and competition has vanished, we must await the construction of the Channel Tunnel with more fortitude than ever. Meanwhile, in wet weather only the very strongest should dare the journey.

All the interest in the comfort of their passengers that is shown by the railway company between London and the harbour, disappears directly the harbour is reached. From that moment the elements are allowed to take charge.

The complaint against inventors, that they spend their time and ingenuity on the wrong things, is never found to be so just as on Channel crossings. The want of protection from the weather; the want of sys-

tem in embarking and disembarking the passengers; the want of system in embarking and disembarking their personal luggage; the want of any order in the Custom-House rooms on either side, so that they are now like the Rugby scrum; the want of cabin doors that will remain shut or open; the want of machinery that will take the boat direct into Boulogne harbour instead of pausing outside to turn, often in the worst sea; in short, the want of consideration for anyone on board except the officers, is a continual scandal.

Take the matter of gangways alone. Surely there could be many? But no, the harder it rains, the more, I have observed, do the officials cling to the tradition of the single gangway. Few sights are more depressing than the first glimpse of a rough sea in a gale, as one gets it from the train at Folkestone and Dover. But there is one sight that is even more miserable and that is the solitary crowded gangway, slippery and set at an angle of forty-five degrees, by which all the thousand passengers have slowly and uncomfortably to gain the ship.

I don't wish to be a spoil-sport, but I think the porters on both sides of the Channel, covered with bags and alpenstocks, for carrying which they are going to be far too heavily paid, get too much pleasure in using indiscriminately the steps from the top deck to the lower. Not only going down, but up. Couldn't an order be issued making these steps "one-way"?

And what about the immense distance, without any protection from the weather, from the steamers to that inhospitable row of benches presided over by the amia-

ble gentlemen who refuse to accept an Englishman's word? I am thinking in particular of Dover, but the height of discomfort seems to have been aimed at in all the ports. At the end of a bad crossing, to be again exposed to the elements after what we have the right to think of as dry land is reached, should be the final ordeal; but we then must wait while our bags are rummaged for a shilling's worth of *Eau de Cologne!*

Chicken.—The chicken—in all its manifestations, young, old, male, female and egg—is the Continent's best friend. In England it is still something of a state dish, and you will ask for it in vain at more inns than not; but on the Continent no *auberge* or *trattoria* is too small to produce either a *poulet* or a *pollo*, with an omelette to precede it.

"O hen," I should say, were I a poet in the mood for an ode—"O hen, we don't much admire your silly face; we are ashamed of your greed; we are pained when you run away and refuse to be friendly; we hate the noise you make; we hate even more the noise that your husband makes; but we can't get on without you. You can always be relied upon to fill a gap, one way or other. We like you roasted, we like you grilled, we like you spatchcocked, we don't in the least agree that 'a chicken boiled is a chicken spoiled'; we think that without assistance from you a *risotto* wouldn't be worth having. Many a time and oft, after a long day's tramp or a mountain ascent, or even a motor run, you have saved our lives. You come to the rescue when beef is tough and mutton underdone, and even more so when there is no meat in the house. For you have the price-

less merit of adjacency. Other food has to be bespoken, but there you are!

"And, O hen, your fruit! What should we do without eggs? It is an excitement to find them, it is a joy to eat them. We like them boiled (four minutes for mine), we like them fried, we like them poached; best of all we like them with bacon. But bacon is better at home, O hen, than on the Continent. In France they call it *lard* (the shame!) and are sparing with it; in Italy they call it *lardo* and are even more sparing with it. For eggs and bacon as they should be, England is the only place. In Holland they know about them but serve them too dry. Yes, O hen, O chicken, for you in all your manifestations, we must seek the Continent!"

Thus, were I a poet, I should sing. But I am no poet, and so you must either be left unsung or the service must be performed by Mr. Yeats (who won the Nobel Prize for less), or Mr. Bridges (who invented the Great Silence), by Mr. A. E. Housman or Mr. Kipling, by Mr. Binyon or Mr. de la Mare, by Mr. Squire or Sir Henry Newbolt.

Churches.—English travellers on the Continent are liable to severe shocks of surprise on finding that the churches are open all day and every day. It is even possible to enter the chancel of a cathedral without having to pay a fee.

Civilization (Failure of.)—See Channel Crossing.

Claret.—This beverage on the Continent is served stone cold, unless you particularly ask that it should be warmed.

Collars.—No scientific man or philosopher has ever yet been able to explain why the button-hole at the back of a Continental collar is horizontal, while that of an English collar is vertical. A man can become an F.R.S. and still have no theory as to this astonishing disparity.

Comic Papers.—Continental comic papers have the same pictures every week, and, even if the words underneath them are changed, it is the same joke. Were there no underclothes there would be no comic papers.

Concierge.—Whatever fluctuations may occur in the government of the countries of Europe—though Kings or Kaisers fall and anarchy reigns—the concierge will still be in control. Nothing can shake the power either of him or his wife. They sit at the door by day and move their bed to the door by night. They see all and hear all. They know who enters the house and who leaves it. They cannot be put off with falsehoods. If they don't like you they can make your life a burden; and if they don't dislike you they can do so too. Money can placate but never buy them.

Consuls.—No one has ever seen one of these elusive creatures. The most he has seen is an underling who is sorry the Consul isn't in and can't say when he will return.

Corridor.—This is the part of a Continental train reserved for those passengers to whom, as they stand conversing or looking at the scenery, it comes always as a shock, very reluctantly realized, that other persons should want to pass.

Couriers.—A courier is a man whose profession it is to look out slower trains and engage worse rooms than anybody else.

Croupiers.—Men in black coats and dyed moustaches who have never been to bed.

Customs-House.—A Customs-House is a place where otherwise scrupulously truthful men say they have nothing to declare. When the officer finds their cigars they say that their fool of a servant must have packed them against orders; but as they cannot speak the language the officer does not understand, and if he did he would not believe it.

Discomfort.—See Channel Crossing.

Elements (Exposure to.)—See Channel Crossing.

Expenses.—These are always rather more than three times what you had calculated they would be.

Foreigners.—It is a great shock to many English people on the Continent to find that they are foreigners; but it rarely causes them to revise their opinion of those creatures on returning home.

Guides (Day).—Day Guides are elderly men with appealing eyes and baggy umbrellas who know the year when Raphael was born.

Guides (Night).—Night Guides should be avoided.

Illness.—It is very unwise to have an illness on the Continent. Nothing is so resented there as sickness and especially the sickness of a foreigner.

Interpreters.—Interpreters are known as such because the word "Interpreter" is on their caps; otherwise you might think of them as almost anything but linguists. They are useful as buffers between you and

the rapacity of porters and cabmen; but in the end it costs you more.

Inventors, Their Misdirected Industry.—See Channel Crossing.

Landing-ticket.—The piece of cardboard that you lose while you are being sea-sick.

Liqueurs.—It is possible on the Continent to be given over-measure of old brandy or other liqueurs and not be charged for it. Nothing of the kind has ever happened in England.

Lunch.—This is the best meal of the day. It can begin as early as eleven and last till three.

Mosquitoes.—Flying insects with a damnably poisonous bite which every one except hotel-managers has seen, heard and suffered from.

Mosquito-nets.—Protections against mosquitoes which are "absolutely unnecessary, but you can, of course, have one if you insist."

Music-Halls.—In England and America the music-hall is popular, largely because the performance, having begun at the advertised hour, goes on without a break, or with one interval of very brief duration, till the end. In the Continental music-hall there is a considerable pause after every turn, and in the middle of the evening so long a pause that one wonders if the band or the scene-shifters have struck.

In Austria and Germany the music-hall audience on the ground floor and in the boxes dine during the performance; the others drink beer.

In Italian music-halls few people listen and there is no applause, but a performer now and then learns from

the decreased volume of cat-calls and hisses that he has displeased the audience less than most.

In Italian music-halls a popular song is sometimes sung as often as three times in one evening by different singers, which indicates how lightly the Italian showmen take their task. Such a lapse in England or America would turn a manager's shirt-front black.

Officers.—Nothing is so astonishing about the Continental officer that you see in the streets and cafés as the friends he is with.

Old Masters.—Although London has the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection, Londoners look at Old Masters only when they are on the Continent.

Oysters.—English people, accustomed to oysters that are dead and dry and very dear, are surprised to find that Continental oysters are often cheap and are always served fresh and alive, in the deep shell, with their juice still in them.

Passports.—Largely obsolete documents which, in spite of this widely advertised obsolescence, you must still line up in a queue on each side of the Channel to display to officials who don't look at them.

Pavements.—Pavements on the Continent are used not only for people to walk on but as dining-rooms.

Plates.—When these articles are judged to be sufficiently cold, hot meat is served on them.

Platforms.—There are no railway platforms on the Continent, with the result that every passenger must also be a mountaineer.

Porters (Hotel).—Hotel porters come from Switzerland and never go back. They are big and blond

and speak English, and are so wealthy as to be superior to tips. They are always on duty, always smart, and they can attend politely to ten people at once, draft a telegram, look out a train, change a five-pound note, ring up the occupant of a room and tell you also at what hour a theatre begins, all at the same time. If they remained in Switzerland, Switzerland would be the leading country of the world.

Porters (Railway).—Continental porters, besides being dressed in blue, differ from ours also in their disdain of barrows. English porters rejoice to keep us waiting while they "fetch a barrow," and as at all the great stations, by some careful arrangement of the general manager of the line, there is only one barrow to every ten porters, we are often kept waiting for a very long time. While an English porter is fetching a barrow the Continental porter has produced a strap and is binding your luggage together preparatory either to lifting it to his shoulder or crawling underneath and gradually rising more or less erect with it all over him, according to the weight. It is nothing for a Continental porter to carry in this way, by one strap, one innovation trunk, three portmanteaux, two kit-bags, a dressing-case, a tea-basket and a pair of skis.

Poste-Restante.—This is the department in Continental post-offices where travellers' letters are kept from the traveller by casual clerks smoking cigarettes. All Continental post-offices are run mainly in the interests of the tobacco trade, but in no department is smoking so steady. It is possible to believe the hotel

porter who says there is no letter for you, but one never has confidence in the thoroughness of the *Poste-restante* attendant.

Postmen.—An English postman never under any provocation advances beyond the front-door mat, but on the Continent a postman with a registered letter enters your bedroom and wakes you up and produces an ink-pot and pen in order to get your signature.

Progress (Want of).—See Channel Crossing.

Queues.—No true European respects the queue, even though it has a French name. The last to arrive often sees to it that he is the first served.

Race Meetings.—At Continental race meetings there is complete silence until the horses are near the winning-post or a jockey is thrown at a water-jump. Bookmakers do not exist, and you may leave your field-glasses on a chair confident that they will remain there. On the other hand, *pari-mutuel* prices are very small and you don't get your stake back.

Saltspoons.— There are no saltspoons on the Continent.

Secrets.—The principal secret of travellers on the Continent, and particularly in Paris, is the name of "the best little restaurant you ever dreamed of—simple, I admit, but with the most wonderful wine and cooking." But when you reach it, it has either disappeared, changed hands, or "gone down."

Sleeping-cars.—The sleeping-cars, known in France as *wagon-lits*, in Spain as *wagon-camas*, in Italy as *carrozze di letto* and in Germany as *schlaf wagen*, are possible only if you are rich enough to se-

cure a whole compartment for yourself. You may then arrange your luggage, undress and dress with some degree of comfort. The trouble about them is that they have nearly always been engaged by other people; and it is, of course, other people who are the traveller's cross. At every turn he is up against them. For if you are fortunate enough to get a berth it is made intolerable by the man who occupies the one below you. If you get a whole compartment you have to hear the other people washing. They are always washing when you want to wash, and there are no more towels. Also they are always having their beds made when you want yours to be made. Conductors of *wagon-lits* always do more for other people than for you.

Only very strong people should travel by *wagon-lit*, because you have to push your luggage through the window.

Wagon-lits have more buttons and switches than anyone has ever discovered the meaning of. Just as dawn comes you find the one that turns on the light. *Wagon-lits* are divided into two berths, upper and lower. Hospitals are full of travellers who have tried to get into the upper.

Wagon-lits have no ventilation, but there is a little window at the top that admits the smuts.

Springs.—The things which ought to be under your *wagon-lit* but have perished.

String.—The tenuous substance with which Italian porters tie up trunks and bags that are already safely closed and locked.

Stupidity.—See Channel Crossing.

Sugar.—Were it sweet, sugar on the Continent might be excellent.

Theatres.—Theatres on the continent differ from ours in being very difficult to get into. Here the managers welcome patrons, but there they set you the task of getting past three men in top-hats in the lobby, whose duty and joy it is to take away your ticket and discuss it together. After a while, unless they dislike you very much, they give you another, which several other persons have to see before it passes into the hands of an elderly woman of forbidding aspect who consents to show you your place only on the receipt of a bribe. As, when you are really in the theatre, the play is in a language that you can't understand and probably had much better not understand, it is better to sit over dinner.

Ticket Collector.—The man who never wants to see your ticket unless you are asleep.

Trams.—Unless the street is too narrow for tram lines, many Continental municipalities do not lay them. They then fit the tramcars with bells and tell the drivers never to stop clanging.

Wagon-Restaurants.—There is no meal on a visit to the Continent so good as that in the first *wagon-restaurant.* Afterwards they deteriorate. They are staffed entirely by ex-jugglers. No tip has yet been produced large enough to persuade the chief official to let you change your seat. There is a point on the line between Calais and Boulogne where the curve is so sharp that you always get the next man's soup.

Waiters.—Waiters are the principal inhabitants of the Continent. There are in the cities a few people not in evening dress by day, and in the country one is aware now and then of a peasant; but waiters are everywhere. They rise with the lark and retire with the owl, and in the interim never sit down.

Waiters (Wine).—On the Continent the wine waiter does not have to be sent for, but is at your side as you sit down.

Windows.—Things which "il est dangereux de se pencher au dehors" and "pericoloso sporgersi," also from which, in Germany, there must be no outside-leaning.

Wives.—Wives are useful on the Continent because they learnt French and Italian and German at school, and their husbands didn't.

THE BUNCH

In a hillside vineyard above Epernay a bunch of grapes was ripening in the sun of the Marne, and as they ripened they talked.

Like many young things about to enter the world, they talked of what might be their lot and what they wished to do.

"You have a great destiny in front of you," said the Vine. "You are going to be champagne. You are going to be drunk only by the rich—chiefly the new rich and the temporarily rich. You will froth out of bottles at banquets into beautiful glasses, amid flowers and silver and rich dishes. Men in white shirts and women with low necks will talk the more gaily for your sparkle."

"Are we going to sparkle, Mother?" asked one of the Grapes. "How delicious!"

"Yes, it's your special privilege. And you will be very expensive. You will cost scores of francs a bottle, whereas many of your relations in the vineyards over there will only cost two or three. You are of the elect!"

"And what are the other places where they will drink us?" one of the Grapes asked.

"All kinds," said the Vine. "You may find yourselves at weddings and christenings and at coming-of-age parties. The wine is not unknown at race-meetings. Indeed, it marks most festivities here and everywhere."

"I should like to be consumed at a wedding," said a sentimental Grape. "I should like to be in the glass which the bridegroom raises to the bride, who may be the most lovely of her sex and the most charming. But if that is not my good fortune," it added, "I should like to be consumed at the christening of their first child. That would be a life worth living."

"Very pretty," said the Vine. "But it is all a gamble. You might equally be consumed at a lunch party of financiers, where you will come in useful to dull some victim's judgment. 'When you see champagne at lunch suspect a swindle,' said a wise man."

"Then aren't we always the friend of man?" the Grape inquired.

"By no means," said the Vine. "You can get into his head and make him do a thousand foolish things."

"But we couldn't harm women—beautiful women?" the Grape asked anxiously.

"Yes, and women too," said the Vine.

"I should like to be consumed at the banquet that follows the settlement of the Reparations question, which the vines are always talking about," said another. "There must be wonderful speeches on such an occasion. I should like to be sipped by the French Premier as he affirms his total satisfaction."

"You're very pessimistic," said a neighbouring Vine

who had been listening, and who was famous for her cynicism.

"Why?" asked the little Grape in surprise.

"Because," said the cynic, "none of you will get into bottles that are ready to be drunk for at least seven years; at least I hope you won't; but there may be exceptions." She laughed sardonically.

"Oh, how disappointing!" said the patriotic Grape.

"It's a fact," said the cynic. "Isn't it, neighbour?"

"Yes," said the mother of the little Grapes, "it is so. I hope that none of you will be consumed before then. You will be in bottles till then, or possibly not at all, for there may be something wrong with you. And even if you reach the bottle stage you won't necessarily be consumed in France. Many of you may stay here, but others will be treated with chemicals and sent to England, where they like us dry."

"But what would England do for champagne if she and France fell out?" asked the patriotic Grape.

"Ah! that's the question," said her mother. "She would have to drink what she's got and then go without."

"Are there no grapes in England?" some one asked.

"Only the stupid fat ones that grow under glass," said a cynic. "None worth calling grapes. You can't have real grapes to make wine with if you have no sun; and there's no sun in England. England has nothing but weather."

"Wouldn't England be very unhappy without champagne?" the other asked.

"Very," said the cynic.

"And does France get anything from England in return to make her gay?"

"No," said the cynic. "Nothing but tourists, and they only make her rich."

"And does she want to lose them?"

"Not at all. But when people are angry they forget what is good for them, and what risks they run, and everything."

"Do tell us," the sentimental Grape asked the cynical Vine, "what the exception is. You said there might be a chance of being consumed before seven years."

The cynic laughed. "Not consumed," she corrected, "but made use of. You might get into one of those bottles of damaged wine which are reserved to be broken over the bows of newly-launched vessels, in which case you will fall straight into the dirty water of the dock."

The Bunch shuddered.

"And what about America?" another Grape inquired. "Does she make wine?"

"She used to make a little," said the Vine. "But she mayn't any longer."

"Mayn't?"

"No, she's decided it's bad for her."

"Wine?"

"Yes."

"But how can wine be good for one country and bad for another? Are the French and Americans so different?"

"I can't say," said the Vine. "It's beyond me. But there it is."

"And is America perfect now?" the Grape inquired.

"Naturally," said the Vine. "Directly you forbid people to drink the juice of the grape they become perfect. It notoriously is the end of all trouble."

"Then none of us will ever reach America?" the Grape asked.

"I think we have talked long enough," said the Vine. "I never had such inquisitive children before."

THE FEARLESS PET

After having spent many years in considering the problem, I have come to the conclusion that the happiest life is that which is spent in a well-appointed home by a fearless pet.

I was helped to this belated decision by the contemplation of a tame jackdaw.

I had long known the wild jackdaw in his two commonest spheres of interest: both as a vigilant observer and probably severe critic of deans and chapters from a point of vantage on cathedral spires; and also as a black ghost flitting on silent wings from hollow trees, a marauder with no language but a cry, yet plenty of that. But not till a week or so ago did I find myself in a country house in which, although the master pays the rates and taxes and arranges for repairs, and the mistress orders the meals, and other persons have their duties, the sole authority is a jackdaw with one clipped wing. This kind of masterful fowl was new to me, and I confess that for a while I shrank from him and covered my ears when he issued his discordant orders. (If the ornithological books are to be believed, the jackdaw's voice, in captivity, approximates to those of the family that he dominates. I hope there are exceptions to this rule.)

To the timid, among whom I count myself almost chief, there is something terrifying in this great bird's beak, so long and sharp; in the red cavern that he exposes when he says—what says he?—caw; in the calculating coldness of his searching blue eye. The eyes of all birds are disconcerting, for you know not where they look, and, even more, where they do not look (the pelicans in St. James's Park are excellent examples); but the jackdaw is so much more aggressive and purposeful, and takes rebuffs so much less seriously, that this blue eye of his is peculiarly frightening. "What is he plotting now?" you ask yourself. "What is the next uncanny project?" And you carefully remove your signet ring, if you wear one, and secrete it in a pocket, lest it and your fingers are snapped up simultaneously.

At first, as I say, he had me trembling; nor did the fact that he closely resembled two friends of mine, an historian and a yachtsman, seem to help. But when, suddenly, as I was reading a book in the garden, he alighted on my knee, I fell beneath his sway. After that I also was his slave, and most of my lunch found its way into that scarlet tunnel, for he sat then on the back of the chair; and now all meals seem insipid for want of such a familiar. I have known many varieties of pet, and not a few of them fearless, but it would seem, if this bird is typical, that the jackdaw exceeds all in assurance and instant expression of his demands.

A happy life! What his doubts and fears may be, I know not; he gives no sign of any of the fever and the fret that line our brows; all that you are aware of is an

intense craving for adventure, which is usually gratified, a constant hunger punctually assuaged, and a desire for the society of men and women—his true peers, that is to say—which in his particular case is fulfilled. There comes, it is true, a time when the wicker gate of his cage is opened, and he is ordered to enter it, but even that restriction has its compensating fun, for he leads the whole place a dance for some twenty minutes every evening, before consenting to enter, and rejoices in every dodge and double. It is only during these twenty minutes that he refuses to come when he is called; it is only then that pieces of buttered toast have no allure.

Fearful of him as I was, the first time that this uncanny fowl sat on my knee I experienced a thrill of satisfaction, as well as being conscious of the birth of thraldom. That a bird should do this bold thing, uninvited, full of trustfulness, was so wonderful. That is the way to flatter us, to get us, if they only knew! And especially attractive is it when the overture is made by one of those ethereal, mysterious beings that fly. If I were walking in a deer park and a fawn trotted out and nuzzled against my hand, I admit that I should be conscious of an enormous personal triumph; I should look on myself as a creature apart. But, in the main, such an attention from a quadruped is merely gratifying, not exciting: a fact due, I suppose, to our companionship with horses, cows, dogs, and cats; or, at any rate, to our being accustomed to them. But to be treated spontaneously as the friend of a bird of the air —one of the miracles of creation—that is an honour

indeed, and one of the highest. I suppose that to be intimately the friend of a fish or intimately to have a fish for a friend would be the ultimate ecstasy. But birds can be so aloof that you may judge of my renewed pride and delight when, in the same garden, a white fantail pigeon fluttered out of the blue sky and settled gently on my arm. Normally I consider myself as anything but a "charmeur d'oiseaux": I am too busy, too restless: the rôle needs indolence and infinite time and patience; and so my surprise and pleasure were the greater. Nor, although I had no grain at hand to appease it, did it at once fly away, but remained long enough for me to see how pink were its feet, how pink was its beak, and how crimson its eye-rims.

And this reminds me that if a certain London bank manager is wondering why one of his messengers was so late in returning to the office the other day, I can tell him. I don't know the bank, but the messenger is tall and thin and dignified; he has the usual quiet tail-coat uniform, a tall hat and satchel. But he carries something else besides cheques and bills and investments: he carries birdseed; and whenever his way lies anywhere near Trafalgar Square he stops to feed the pigeons. I have seen pigeons fed by many persons in many lands, but never have I seen a man so beset by pigeons, so covered with pigeons, as this bank messenger. They were on his topper, his shoulders, his arms, his hands, two or three were eating at his lips, and the air was full of the beating wings of others waiting to alight, like cherubim in an old Nativity picture.

To return to my own pigeon, its life and that of its

spouse, an inflated fellow with a ridiculous strut, could not well be happier. They have everything they want, and in addition every kind of extra titbit and attention from the household. For my point is that if the ordinary routine of a domestic pet is happy, how much happier must it be when intimate association with mankind is superimposed! Most of us would like to be friends with some dumb animal, and how seldom can it be contrived! When it is, how we value it; and, similarly, how they must value it too! The pity is that so very few of them are sufficiently fearless to be able to bridge the gulf.

THE FETTERED AND THE FREE

In this report of a conversation between two jackdaws, one tame and the other wild, which I chanced to overhear, I will call the tame one Jack, and the wild one Daw.

Jack was strolling about his territory in his usual nonchalant way, his hands, so to speak, under his coat-tails and his expression half magistrate and half criminal, when Daw alighted suddenly on the garden fence.

"Hullo!" he said.

"Hullo!" said Jack.

"I've been watching you for a long while," said Daw, "and feeling sorry for you, and I thought I'd just come down and say so."

"Sorry!" repeated Jack. "Why?"

"Your clipped wing," said the other; "your restrictions."

"Don't worry about that," said Jack. "I'm all right. Don't I look well?"

"Very," said Daw; "almost too well. Sleek, if not actually fat. But liberty, glorious liberty—don't you miss that?"

"I never had it," said Jack. "I was taken out of the nest and brought here before I was fledged. What we've never had we don't miss."

"But think of the fun of being able to fly wherever you want," said Daw—"the power, the freedom!"

"It's merely acres against square yards," said Jack. "Liberty is only relative. And you do little enough with it, I'll be bound. The same fields, the same trees, the same companions—yes, and the same food. What, by the way, do you eat?"

"Eat?" said Daw. "Worms, insects. Odds and ends. Pheasants' eggs sometimes."

"Yes," said Jack, "but you have to find it for yourself, don't you, out in the cold and the rain? Now, mine's brought to me. I've got them all on the move here, looking after me. They give me things you've never even dreamed of. Macaroni—what do you know about that?"

"I never heard of it," said Daw. "What is it like?"

"It's a kind of artificial worm," said Jack. "Delicious! The Italians make it for me. Then there's buttered toast, and baked potatoes, and cheese, and raw meat, and little titbits of cooked meat too. I get all those brought to me, sometimes to eat before the fire. Now you haven't the faintest notion what it is like to be indoors before a fire! Better than being out in the cold and rain, hunting for food for yourself, I can tell you!"

"Maybe it's more comfortable," said Daw. "But the point is, I'm free and you're not."

"I haven't told you the best yet," said Jack. "Hard-boiled eggs. The yolk. That's the greatest thing in the world. They cook them specially for me here, and the man and I have breakfast together. I sit on his

knee and he feeds me with it. He jolly well has to, because if he doesn't I peck his hand."

"Do you mean to tell me you aren't frightened of him?" Daw asked. "A man? One of those fellows with a gun?"

"Certainly not," said Jack. "I've got him; he's under my claw. I've got them all. There's nothing these creatures won't do for you if you aren't afraid of them. That's what you, the Bird of Freedom, and all the other liberty-loving sillies, don't realize. These creatures are the mildest things on earth really. As for the gun, I don't mind that so much; I'm fond of a bit of cold game myself. But they'd never shoot you if you came down and were friendly. That's what captivity has taught me—they're really our best pals."

"Well, I'm dashed!" said Daw. "But how do you begin? Surely that wants a bit of doing?"

"You do it," said Jack, "because you have to. When your wing has been clipped and you can't get away, you ask yourself what is your wisest course, and see that the sooner you forgive and forget and become intimate and fearless the better time you'll have, and so you flatter them by being nice to them, and the result is that in about five minutes you own the whole place. Why, I'm told by the other birds that come here, robins and chaffinches and sparrows—all that crowd—that the people here were terrible cat-lovers once. The place was a disgrace. But the very day after I began to walk about and make myself agreeable, every cat was bundled off—valuable ones too."

"Amazing!" said Daw. "I can just begin to under-

stand being friendly with a man, but you would never get on terms with cats, would you?" he inquired anxiously.

"Never," said Jack.

"Well," said Daw, "I still cling to my liberty and believe in it; but you're not so much to be pitied as I was thinking."

"No," said Jack. "I'm glad I've converted you. But I don't mind telling you I'm not so happy as I was, since the other evening. The people here have got a book about birds, and the man was reading aloud from the article on us. And how do you think the wretched thing ended? I remember the exact words; in fact I can't forget them: 'When domesticated'—that's me, not you: you needn't let this worry *you*—'when domesticated, its droll trickeries'—I'm 'it,'—'its capability of imitating the human voice and other sounds, are well known. By turns affectionate, quarrelsome, impudent, confiding, it is always inquisitive, destructive, given to purloining; so that, however popular at first as a pet, it usually terminates its career by some unregretted accident.' Now, I don't like that word 'unregretted' at all. It's poisoning my life."

"Then why not come with me and forget it?" said the other. "Come where there is no restriction, where each of us is his own master. I'll help you. Come along."

What Jack would have replied I cannot say, but at this moment a very small girl emerged from the house, and in a moment the wild bird, panic-stricken, had vanished.

"No," said Jack to himself, but loud enough for me to hear, " 'unregretted' or not, life with these people is ample compensation," and, moving to the door of my study, he knocked at it sharply and imperiously several times with his beak to indicate that he was hungry again. Very meekly I left my work and fetched him a banana.

ANIMALS IN COMMUNICATION

A PARAGRAPH, first in a morning paper and then in an evening, tells the world that Mr. Hutson, a postman, crossing a pasture near Grimsby, was approached by a cow lowing piteously and occasionally running to a corner of the field. Following, he found a calf at the bottom of a dry well. The calf was rescued, whereupon the cow showed her delight by unmistakable signs. This incident proves, if proof of anything so obvious were needed, that animals have it in their power to communicate with us.

But what I want to know is, how do they communicate with each other?

It is certainly not by actual speech. Those movements of the lips and tongue and teeth which we bring into play in order to tell each other that it is another wet day, are not, so far as my observation goes, in use among horses, cattle, dogs, or cats. A cat, it is true, purrs, and there may be gradations and subtleties in purring that correspond to speech; but, on the other hand, one does not hear two cats purring at one another. When cats address each other—at any rate, at night—they emit sounds which can so easily be construed into conversation that they had better pass quickly from this inquiry.

But horses and cattle? Beyond the neigh of one horse to another across the hedge, or a bereaved mother's desolate keening for her calf, they are mute; and one rarely sees them even in the attitude of exchanging confidences. For the most part, when two horses or two bullocks are together, it is to join forces in repelling the attacks of flies. They had, however, to let each other know that such combined strategy would be valued. How did they do it? How do they communicate? Is it telepathy?

When we say the dumb animals, always with pity, or, at any rate, conscious of the superiority of our own articulate voices (although how seldom one hears anything good, or says a good thing to the right listener!), we mean quadrupeds. That those other bipeds, birds, talk together, every one is agreed. They are talking all the while, and it is doubtful, however monotonous their song may sound, if they say the same thing oftener than we do. You have only to set up in your garden a table with crumbs punctually scattered on it to realize that there is a very complete system of broadcasting among sparrows and chaffinches, robins and tits. More accurately, I should say, a very complete system of broadcasting between sparrows and sparrows, chaffinches and chaffinches, and tits and tits. For I have observed that each of these species hates the other, and as for the dear little robin, emblem of Peace and Goodwill on our Christmas cards, he is the greediest, most selfish, and least tolerant of them all. But that most birds talk together, whether their words are abusive or not, is clear. As for rooks, when we are near their

assembly we can, of course, actually hear what the discussion is about, for rooks in trees use words far more distinctly than many of those that are intended to reach the Press Gallery in the derivative imitation rookery at Westminster.

I have been referring to the human faculties for articulation and exchange of ideas as though they were perfect; but even with the apparatus of lips, tongue, and teeth that we, the lords of creation, can flaunt so triumphantly at four-footed creatures—our poor dumb friends—we sometimes fail to communicate to others our own meaning. I was never so astonished in my life as one day in Birmingham during the cricket season of 1924 (peace to its splashes!), when the taxi that was taking me, as I hoped and believed, to the county ground to see the opening of the first Test match, drew up at a forbidding-looking building in one of Birmingham's most ill-favoured streets (and she has a plethora of them), and, as I did not get out but sat stolidly on, the driver descended and opened the door with "Here you are."

Anything less like a cricket ground the puny and finite mind of man could hardly conceive. "What do you mean?" I said—I hope like a perfect gentleman, but fear the worst.

"The Synagogue," he replied; "you told me to drive to the Synagogue."

To return to this question of the communication of quadrupeds—the commonest case that comes under our eyes is that of dogs. When do dogs talk? We know from their escapades that dogs can incite each other to

mischief; but is that the result of speech, or is it done by example? How does a naughty adventurous terrier persuade a mild home-keeping spaniel to go hunting? Is it by the visible lure of escape, by the actual sight of himself gaily scampering across the field in the direction of the burrows, or has he used words? Has he said, "You're an awful mutt to stay here in the garden, with a very good chance of being chained up, when there are tons of rabbits over there simply waiting to be chased?" If so, when did he say it, and how?—for who has ever seen a dog's lips move in articulation?

Dogs have sight—wonderful sight, considering how near the ground they are; they have a highly specialized sense of sound; they have the most sensitive noses; they have good memories and a perfect system of associating ideas; they can utter sounds of welcome, of exasperation and of warning. But can they talk? Although I have kept dogs for many years, I can remember no occasion on which I have seen one go up to another and obviously tell him news.

And the fact remains that there are certain things that dogs can't tell each other: such obviously necessary things that one is almost entitled to deduce inability to do so. Take the case of a spaniel with puppies—but first we must assume one or two things; we must assume that a spaniel has a mother's affection, and also that she does not want her offspring unduly to suffer. That is reasonable, isn't it? But who that has kept dogs has ever found a puppy with its mother still on the premises any easier to train than a puppy ravished from the maternal embrace and brought from a distance? Cer-

tainly the yelps of pain or protest, the cries of fear, ring out under both conditions, and a word of counsel from the mother, were she there, would save them all. But it does not. The misdemeanours go on, and the whackings go on. It looks almost as if the mother reall~ were dumb, after all.

THE DOGS OF THE OLD BRIGADE

The ice needing breaking, for we had never met before and there was no immediate topic, who should come to the rescue but the other "friend of man" (for whom no mechanical, petrol-driven substitute has yet been found), the dog? And not an ordinary dog such as we see everywhere, but a visitor from the past, a revenant; in short, a dachshund. In search of a missing owner it pattered across the floor, long and low and sleek and brown and debonair, just as if there had been no Armageddon, just as if it were still the hero of Oberlander's delicate pencil, week by week in the *Flying Leaves.* "Unless I am dreaming," I said, "there goes a dachshund"; and in a few moments we were all at our ease and trying to remember when we had last seen another member of the vanished race, the Dalmatian (or Plum-pudding dog), such as once ran from side to side between the wheels of carriages—from side to side to avoid the horse's hoofs; and at last a witness arose who could fix that event in Edinburgh in 1921. Yes, he had seen one in Heriot Row. Or was it——? No, it was Heriot Row. My own last glimpse of those oscillating spots is so remote that I could not place it at all; and yet I can remember when Plum-pudding dogs were common objects of the town and countryside,

and for a comedian to refer to them as "Damnation terriers" was a sure road to the removal of gravity.

And so from dog to dog we passed, lamenting our losses and wondering why fashions in those animals should change. There was a very real cause—if not a sufficient reason—why the dachshund should have been dethroned; but nothing but caprice can have led to other of the partial eclipses of Sirius. The Bedlington was once a desirable possession; but not often does one see a Bedlington to-day. Is his infrequency the result of a constant desire to fight? Very likely. On the other hand the King Charles spaniel has also vanished, and no one can charge that gay and affectionate high-brow with belligerence. Constancy and courage he had, but he was not always trailing his coat. Were the Martyr monarch interviewed on this subject of dogs (and nothing seems to be easier to Sunday journalists) I hope that one of the questions would bear upon the number of those disembodied little friends of his that now frisk and frolic about his ghostly knees.

Most of us can remember when the more that old ladies saw of men the more they loved pugs, but although there are still old ladies, though very few, and still (I fear) men who can disappoint, the canine solace is a pug no longer. The new comforter is generally either a Pekingese or a Cairn. Now when did the knell of the pug toll forth? When did the Cairn come in? For a true consoler, the Cairn, I should guess, is over-exuberant. His nature is too investigatory; he likes exercise; whereas the pug was quiescent; the pug knew when he was fortunately placed, and, so long as the lap

which it was his destiny to fill was (as it usually was) the lap of luxury, was willing to "stay put." Since the wheel is always turning, the pug may come back. Meanwhile, the demand is for others. And the demand is constantly increasing, every day a new notice-board being somewhere set up beside the highway to tell the passer-by that Sealyhams, Cocker spaniels, West Highlands or Cairns are to be bought in the vicinity. Motor-spirit notices are, of course, most numerous, then tea, and then new-laid eggs; but the new kennels are catching up.

I visited two on a recent week-end; a rather curious pied experience, for on the Sunday I was in kennels devoted to little black Cocker spaniels and on the Monday in kennels devoted to the more dazzling Sealyhams. As I approached this "Maison Blanche," I saw in a neighbouring meadow, through the mist, what might have been a gigantic visitor from another planet moving over the grass on a snow-white cloud. On closer view the vision reduced itself to an ex-officer taking his stud for a walk. They flowed about his considerable feet like a flood. Many a warrior I fancy is now breeding dogs for a livelihood, although not so many, of course, as have exchanged the sword for the chicken-pen. All, however, wear knickerbockers and know the shortest cut to the golf links. Even more numerous are the feminine dog-breeders, in tweed skirts, mostly unmarried. The little Sealyhams, which a very few years ago had never been heard of in London or the South, but are now in hectic demand, barked and yapped me deaf; whereas the little

Cockers only cried and whimpered to be loved. Who could withhold love from a Cocker puppy? Not I. Besides, they wouldn't let you. The more they see of men, the more Cockers like them.

But I have said too much about the smaller dogs. Justice now for the great. When will St. Bernards and Newfoundlands, Great Danes and mastiffs return? When George Du Maurier's hand was busy in *Punch* in adding by sheer force of enchanting example—for the Fair have in certain directions a marvellous tractability—three inches to the height of England's daughters, he often gave his goddesses the companionship of St. Bernards. I see no St. Bernards now. The larger dogs that our present-day reduced, flattened and shingled Amazons lead, or are led by, are Alsatian police-dogs, one of the more humane legacies of the War, or Labradors. But if we had a George Du Maurier to-day, he could, I am sure, with a few strokes, bring the St. Bernard back and set our women's heads again among the stars.

HE AND SHE

He. I have just heard that she is coming by the noon train. This is great news. I must go and make everything ready for her.

* * * * *

Her name, the letter says, is Chloe. I don't like that. I must think of another; something attractive but short; something one can call out loud and sharply.

* * * * *

"Tess," wouldn't be bad. I think I'll call her Tess.

* * * * *

Yes, Tess.

* * * * *

She (*in the train*). I wonder where I'm going. This is very uncomfortable. It shakes horribly.

* * * * *

I hate being alone, too.

* * * * *

I wish I'd been kinder to mother.

* * * * *

I wonder if they've got any shooting. Mother will be disappointed if they haven't.

* * * * *

Poor mother.

* * * * *

He (*on the platform*). She's a beauty. I never saw such silky black ears, such a splendid coat.

* * * * *

But she doesn't seem very friendly. Not a single wag has she given me yet.

* * * * *

She. I don't care much about him; in fact I don't like him at all. I hate having my head patted.

* * * * *

I don't care for his trousers.

* * * * *

Or his boots.

* * * * *

His hand smells of tobacco.

* * * * *

He. This is very disappointing. I was hoping for a real companion; looking forward to it. And she's terrified of me. Won't come near. Hides under the furniture if I approach.

* * * * *

Well, perhaps she's nervous from the journey—the strangeness of it all.

* * * * *

She. I don't care for this place a bit. There's no other dog and no one to talk to. I hate fences all round.

* * * * *

I don't like him a bit. He's a feeble creature; no character. I hate people who are always coaxing me to come to them. It's degrading.

* * * * *

I shall concentrate on the cook.

* * * * *

LATER

The cook's a great disappointment. A vegetarian household, I'm afraid; at any rate, no meat comes my way. Soaked biscuit and cabbage—what's the use of that? Well, if I don't eat it they'll have to give me something better. Nothing like hunger-striking to make them nervous, and one must begin right. Poor mother always said that.

* * * * *

Dear mother.

* * * * *

I wish I'd been kinder to her.

* * * * *

He. She's adamant. I can't get her to come within three yards, and then she's all suspicion. And the worst of it is she's so dainty. You can usually get at a dog through its greed; but not this one. I suppose if I tried raw beef it would be all right; but I don't care for such bribery as that, and the breeder's letter said on no account give meat.

* * * * *

She. I was so hungry to-day I had to eat the biscuit. I'm furious about being so weak-minded, but one must live. The funny thing is it didn't taste so bad. Still, it was a mistake, and now perhaps I'll never persuade them and so never get any meat at all.

* * * * *

He. I'm having rotten luck. To-day after lunch she let me approach my hand almost within an inch, and then a log fell and she rushed in alarm to the other end of the room. She thought I did it. Any unusual sudden frightening sound she blames me for.

* * * * *

I've never been so disappointed.

* * * * *

I always thought that spaniels were so affectionate.

* * * * *

She. He still follows me about with his hand held out to me, making silly murmurs. It's sickening. How I dislike him!

* * * * *

He. This morning a terrible thing happened. Tess ran into the field and caught a young chicken belonging to the farmer. If dogs pursue chickens it is, of course, fatal, so I had to be very severe. After ten minutes spent in pursuit I caught her and lashed her with a switch until she screamed.

* * * * *

It was dreadful, but I had no option.

* * * * *

Spare the rod and spoil the dog.

* * * * *

But that, of course, settles it. She'll never come near me again. I may as well send her away and get another for all the comfort she'll ever be to me.

* * * * *

She. I'm so sore. My sides are that tender I can hardly bear to lie down, and I'm too miserable to stand up. The fact is I worried a chicken. I was bored to death, and there the little idiot was—you know what fools chickens are—and so I grabbed it. It was only for fun; but the way those people carried on! And then HE came out with a lady's riding-whip and after no end of a chase caught me. I knew I was in for it sooner or later, but I decided I'd lead him a dance.

* * * * *

How he puffed and panted!

* * * * *

And then he began to lay it on. My tail, but it hurt! I yelled and yelled, but he went on and on until I really began to admire him in spite of myself. I didn't know he was so masterful. I expected him to stop directly I screamed. But he went on and on until his arm must have ached.

* * * * *

And then he flung me away.

* * * * *

He. The most wonderful thing in the world has happened. She's sitting in my lap, licking my hand!

"NORBURY JACK"

It was shortly after "Norbury Jack," the Airedale, had received, on May 17th, 1923, the bronze medal of the National Canine Defence League for giving warning of fire, that a number of his fellow dogs met to decide upon what was the best form of honour that they too could offer him. Ordinarily, said the Chairman, a champion Mastiff, it was agreed by human beings that a dog's virtue should be its own reward, but on this occasion a little imagination had entered into the case. The action of the National Canine Defence League did credit to their articulate two-legged friends. (Hear, hear.)

The chairman then reminded the meeting of "Norbury Jack's" claim to distinction.

It seemed that on the night of April 18th attention was drawn to the blazing of the out-houses by the clamour which he raised. But for that timely assistance the whole place would have been destroyed.

The Collie said that, though no doubt it was gratifying to see human beings alive to the intelligence of dogs, this seemed to him a rather trivial performance for so much attention. What dog was there in that room, who, in the presence of a rapidly encroaching

fire, would not utter sounds of alarm? To make a row under such conditions was practically automatic. (Oh, Oh!) He was not trying to underrate "Norbury Jack's" action; he was merely suggesting that it was not a matter for any special excitement on their part. The medal was putting a premium on a purely instinctive action. Had "Norbury Jack" refrained him from making a row, that would have been, if not precisely praiseworthy, at any rate remarkable. He personally was opposed to carrying the matter any further. (Groans.)

The Irish Setter here sprang to his feet to say that he totally disagreed with the last speaker, who, like most Scottish dogs, was cold and parochially and pedantically logical. (Hear, hear!) If merit were always measured in that frigid and mechanical way the world would not be worth living in. He moved that "Norbury Jack" be invited to as rich a banquet as could be arranged. (Loud cheers.)

The Greyhound said he should like to second that.

The Skye Terrier said that there was a great deal in what his friend and compatriot the Collie had put before them. Fire was such a terrifying element that few dogs could forbear from running screaming from it, and a sense of self-protection would probably cause them to run in the direction of their masters. None the less it was an admirable thing for the master to recognize the value of such a warning. A medal was all very well as a permanent token, but for real appreciation he, the speaker, was in favour of the banquet as well.

The Clumber Spaniel said that what they had to remember was that it was just as easy for a dog frightened by a fire to lose his head completely and run away from his owner, as towards him, and that in the present case "Norbury Jack" had run instantly towards his owner. That was the peculiar excellence of this case. Let there by all means be a banquet.

The Collie, asking leave to speak again, repeated that he had no animus against "Norbury Jack," but he was against facile sentiment. He was, however, wholly in favour of the banquet.

The St. Bernard, who had come all the way from Switzerland to attend the meeting, said that he was delighted to hear of an Airedale winning a medal for assisting mankind. The circumstance that such altruism was a daily occurrence with himself did not detract from the merit of the deed. He hoped that the banquet would be arranged, and arranged quickly, as he should like to stay for it.

The Bedlington said that he should throw himself bodily into the banquet scheme.

The Newfoundland said that he agreed with the St. Bernard. He was glad to welcome the Airedale to the ranks of the life-savers. He welcomed also the proposal of a banquet.

The Aberdeen said that he had come to the meeting expressly to suggest a banquet.

The Yorkshire Terrier said that though his capacity was small he hoped to do justice to "Norbury Jack's" heroism.

The Pomeranian said that he hoped there would be

a banquet, but would take it kindly if there were no plum-pudding.

The Lurcher said that there were conceivable cases where a dog of spirit would be doing his only true duty if he allowed his master's house to burn down. He himself had a master so brutal and exacting that no calamity could be too severe for him.

The Chairman here interrupted to say that, interesting as was the last speaker's experience, it hardly bore upon the situation.

The Lurcher apologized for being so passionately personal and expressed his entire approval of the project of giving "Norbury Jack" a banquet.

The Sealyham, who claimed to be the most popular dog of the day, said that he would gladly extend his patronage to the banquet.

The Spaniel said that the notion of a banquet appealed to him.

The Pekingese (who was accompanied by a Chinese interpreter) said that in his country a dog's chief duty was to its parents and ancestors, but here, he had noticed, parents and children were quickly parted, usually for ever. An English dog normally never saw its father at all, and its mother only for a few weeks. If a dog had neither father nor mother to care for, it was right and proper to be solicitous about owners and, if necessary, to give notice of fire. He was in favour of a banquet, and hoped there would be snipes' livers, as those were expressly mentioned by the best Chinese authority on the dietary of Pekingese spaniels. (Sensation.)

The French Poodle said that he had often done things quite as noteworthy and probably even more heroic than "Norbury Jack," but no one had recorded them. Heroism, he had observed, had got to happen at the right moment—that is to say when some one was looking—or it was in danger of being called duty. None the less, although he cared little for English food, he should register a vote for the banquet.

Other dogs having expressed their views in similar terms, the Chairman said that it seemed to be the wish of the majority that there should be a banquet and it was not necessary to take a show of tails. It only remained to appoint a small committee to carry out the arrangements. This the meeting was proceeding to do when I left.

THE TWINS

"We are all so unhappy," said the letter. "Poor Jack's broken his leg. He won't be out and about again for a long while. Do come and cheer us up."

I went, of course, and heard the whole story. Lucky the bus strike was on!

I saw Jack first. He was looking exceedingly sorry for himself, but rather liking his place in the limelight. A gentle illness now and then, when one is not unpopular in the house, can be very gratifying, and it's cheaper than a formal rest-cure. Sympathy before routine. Friends: not nurses.

Looking at Jack stretched out luxuriously with an expression in his eye compounded of self-pity and self-satisfaction, I felt that I could sustain—that is the word, I believe—a broken leg myself now and again and be all the better for it.

In the library, over our tea, Margaret told me all about the accident.

It seems that the two children—they are twins, but not a bit alike—had had an unexpected windfall. Uncle Jim, back from India, had blown in to lunch and had presented his nieces with a ten-shilling note apiece. Uncles apparently, base as the world has grown, still occasionally do things like this. Good. Let the gods

stand up for uncles! The consequence was that no sooner was lunch over—in fact, before it was over for careful adult eaters and drinkers—the twins were off on a shopping expedition, and of course Jack went too.

"You know how fond he is of going out with the children?" Margaret added.

"Of course," I said. "Why not? I should like to go out with them myself."

"Yes," sighed their mother; "but you don't know how wilful they are."

Don't know? Of course I know. Wilfulness is the order of the day. But what a change! Looking back on my own childhood I can remember almost no occasion on which I was wilful—I mean detrimentally. There was no chance; we weren't allowed to be. My vision of my own childhood is as of a long, straight and tidy avenue, with, on each side, grass which it was our duty to keep off, and which we kept off. But now the only thing that the young keep off is the path itself. And when they are a little older—in the later teens—and they have their lip-sticks and their cigarette-cases, you might as well try to control the movements of a blizzard.

"Well," said Margaret, "when they got to Regent Street they seem each to have set up independence in an acute form, so that, instead of doing their shopping together, they separated, and one went into a shop on one side of the street and the other into a shop on the other. I blame their uncle intensely."

I made a sound that meant "Oh, rubbish!"

"Yes, I do," Margaret continued hotly. "When

he gave them the notes he made the foolish stipulation that they should spend them at once. 'No nonsense about money-boxes,' he said."

"Quite right," said I.

"Not at all, not at all," said Margaret. "Quite wrong. Uncles can be very dangerous and disturbing. The girls' heads were completely turned. And as for poor Jack—you see he was distracted. He adores them both, and he felt it his duty to be with both; he was responsible for them. But how can anyone be with two wilful girls at the same moment when one is on one side of Regent Street and one is on the other! It isn't possible."

"No," I agreed after sufficient thought; "it isn't possible."

"And that's how the accident happened," said Margaret. "The poor darling kept crossing from one side to the other, trying to have his eye on both, and a taxi came along and knocked him over and broke his leg. If there hadn't been a bus strike he'd have been killed for a certainty."

"Good old Jack!" said I. "How splendid of him!"

"Yes," said Margaret; "and there are people who say that collies aren't trustworthy!"

GREEN SOUNDS IN A GREEN SHADE

Returning from Wembley down the Harrow Road I noticed a man mowing a grassy bank with a scythe. Always a rare spectacle now, and particularly so in London, it seemed the more anachronistic after the orgy of modernity which I had just left and which was still making my head dizzy—the Palace of Engineering, with its whirling fly-wheels and mechanical devices for doing everything without hands; the Palace of Industry, where bread was baked and wrapped up by inhuman machines under your eyes; the aeroplanes buzzing above: the general impression of civilization at the highest and noisiest pressure.

Watching the mower at his task, with his back swaying like music and his bare brown arms rhythmically controlling the swaths, I thought again of what we lost when the scythe went out and the fussy little lawn-mower came in: lost in sight and lost in sound, even though we gained in every other way. "But the scythes had to go," the strident voice of utilitarianism reminds me. "The scythe is too slow. And also, it doesn't cut close enough. What kind of a mess would it make of the centre court at Wimbledon?" True. I do not see the scythe dealing faithfully with the tender shoots from the shores of Solway

Firth on which the Lenglen leaps to conquer; and yet, even if there was not great lawn-tennis before there were mechanical lawn-mowers, there was great cricket: greater cricket possibly even than to-day; and it was played on pitches that man had to prepare without any assistance from engineers.

I am merely recording; not framing any censorious indictment. The loss of the steady swish of the scythe, broken now and again while the hone is in use, and then resumed with a new series of long soothing strokes (Andrew Lang wrote a charming poem about this soft melody)—that loss is a serious one, and the countryside is the poorer for it; but I maintain that the whirr of the lawn-mower, although never competing in beauty, has an agreeable quality of its own. It is, for all its metallic chatter, a delicious noise to wake to. It tells that the morning is fine, for lawns are rarely mown in actual rain; it tells that some one less fortunate than oneself is up and about and busy, a thought that lays emphasis on one's own superior luck; it suggests the pleasure of the games that are to come later, whether lawn-tennis or croquet, golf-croquet, or bowls; it gently amuses the mind with speculations as to where the machine now is as the sound diminishes or grows; at what point it will stop for the grass to be emptied from the receptacle; how good that grass must smell! And so one lies on in a bliss that is partly stupor, lulled and serene, waiting for the knock that heralds tea.

No one emerging gradually from sleep, with sense after sense, one by one, returning from their nightly

journey to oblivion and assembling for action, can fail soon to be conscious of the omnipresent rattle of the mowing machine, which has an odd vibrant air-filling penetration; but the ear will be longer in detecting that comforting rumble, with now and then a squeak in it, which tells that the roller is at work.

I suppose that no one will believe me when I say that I like rolling a lawn; but the statement could not be more veracious were it uttered on the rack. I like rolling a lawn. I like the actual conflict with the roller, which is just heavy enough to bring out a certain combativeness; I like to feel the worm castings go down under it with a faintly perceptible crunch; I like the easy progress, steady, irresistible (thanks to my strength of body and mind), purposeful, beneficial. It is a task that exercises without fatigue and cheers its performer with the knowledge that he is doing something of value. He who rolls is earning whatever meal comes next. He who rolls can also be escaping from the others. "Look at that nice kind Mr. Lucas, rolling," says the hostess; "isn't it angelic of him?" and although I am really pleasing myself first and foremost, it is possible to flush with self-esteem too.

For, I repeat, I like rolling. I like the opportunity it gives both for observation and for contemplation. Spaniels, as you approach, defy you and refuse to move until they are almost under the weight. Birds have almost no fear of the roller, where a lawn-mower would have them in a ferment. They let you get quite close; robins almost sit on the handle. The flowers emit

their most delicate fragance for him who quietly rolls; wafts of sweetbrier come his way.

But if there were absolute silence, I don't think I should like rolling so much, or collect so many thoughts during the operation. I like its sounds: the muttered disagreement that always goes on between the two cylinders and is accentuated by any lump; the occasional squeal.

When I go to Lord's and see a man perched up on a motor-roller I am sorry for him. That is not rolling: that is mere conducting. (I borrow the word from a French innkeeper who once drove me in his car from Caudebec to Dieppe; "J'aime beaucoup de conduire," he said.) None of the pleasures that I know can be his. But when I go to Lord's and see a man perched up on a motor-lawn-mower, I think him fortunate, for I dislike the bustle and scurry and bent attitude involved in pushing a lawn-mower as much as I like the leisureliness and comparative muteness of rolling. I am never angelic enough to mow the lawn, however nice and kind I may be! But to roll it, yes; I would roll it all the way to Rio.

For the rest, the sounds of the garden are chiefly the notes of birds, and it is one of the tragedies of life that so few people can identify them or agree in their identification. What is the bird that, at this very moment as well as at most other moments between dawn and eve, is saying, "Stick to it"? There is much talk of the recent broadcasting of the nightingale; but the nightingale is easy. By singing at night he turns the problems of ornithology into child's play. What I want is a gramo-

phone record of all the garden birds, with names, so that I can place them at once. But more than anything do I want to know the name of the bird who insults me by saying, "Stick to it!" Morning, noon, and afternoon he thus adjures me—me, who like rolling!

And I have said nothing about the most exciting garden noise at all. I have been tiresome about scythes, tedious about lawn-mowers, and conceited about rolling; and all the while there are such sounds going on under the turf as no one would believe—because no one could hear. But look at that thrush over there on the grass with his head on one side. Do you know what he is doing? He is listening in! To what? He is listening for a worm. But—cruel Nature again!—the bitter joke to the worms is that apparently worms can't hear the thrush.

THE SWEEP

It used to be a favourite device of humorous artists —I think there are several examples in Leech's work— to make drawings of chimney-sweeps in close conjunction with persons of superior cleanliness and fastidious attire. Indeed, it is probably still done, for a belief in reincarnation is tenaciously held among jokes.

But the odd thing is that, though I have seen sweeps all my life—and a very early recollection is of running out into the garden to watch the brush emerge from a chimney—they have either been on foot pushing their barrows, or driving little carts, or about to begin their task in the sheeted room itself. Not till last week did I ever see a sweep sitting in a railway carriage next to a person of superior cleanliness and more or less fastidious attire. But I saw it then, and I remember the incident with some clearness, because the person beside him was myself.

He was a sweep of the old school. What the sweeps of the new school are like I have no notion; but I suppose that they are as revolutionary as their contemporaries in other branches of art. Their rods, I should guess, are no longer straight but resemble corkscrews, their brushes are no longer round, and they probably maintain that soot is white. But my sweep belonged

to the past, and in our conversation he lamented the changes that have come upon the world, not so much in the matter of sweeping as in the attitude of people towards those who perform that necessary task.

"I hope," he said, "that whenever you meet a sweep in the street, you throw a kiss to him."

"Certainly not," I replied.

He sighed. "Just as I expected," he said. "And there are very few left that do. But when I began life it was still quite a common habit. I walked about having kisses thrown to me on all sides."

"But why?" I asked.

"Because it's lucky," he said. "Didn't you know that? When you meet a sweep you should always throw him a kiss, and then you have good luck. Don't you want good luck?"

"Want it!" I exclaimed; "want it!"

"Well," he said, "that's a way to get it. But people don't seem to know it any more. I suppose it's because it's only the rules for bad luck that are talked about. Mothers tell their children all about spilling salt, and walking under ladders, and going to sea on Friday, and crossing on the stairs: all the things that bring bad luck; but they don't tell them about the lucky ones. At least, only a few. They tell them about ladybirds or spiders settling on your hand, and about picking up pins, but they don't tell them about chimney-sweeps."

"Do you share in the good luck that you produce?" I asked.

"Not us," he replied.

"But surely that's very unfair," I said. "Surely it's wrong that sweeps should be the means of spreading good fortune, but should have no one themselves to throw kisses to? Isn't there anyone?"

"Not that I've heard of," he said. "No, we just make good luck for others."

"But do you really make it for others?" I asked. "Have you any proof?"

"Proof!" he cried. "The stories I could tell you! Well, here's one. I remember one morning, years and years ago, I was going along Knightsbridge way a little after seven o'clock—we begin betimes, you know—and at William Street a lady on horseback was crossing the road to get into the Row. She saw me and blew me a kiss. A pretty lady she was too; a most beautiful lady. Well, I thought no more about it, and I dare say as many as three years passed when, one day as I was pushing my barrow down Park Lane, I was stopped by a lady walking beside a nurse who was wheeling a perambulator, with the sweetest baby you ever saw inside it.

"The lady looked at me very hard and then she stopped me. 'I do believe you're my sweep,' she said. 'Kate,' she said to the nurse, 'I do believe this is my sweep. Do you remember,' she said to me, 'my kissing my hand to you just by Albert Gate one morning early about three years ago?'

"I said I did. And it was true. There was something about her that had stuck in my mind all that while.

" 'Well,' she said, 'I've been looking for you ever

since. You brought me luck.' And she gave me a golden sovereign; for those were the days when there were such things.

"'And might I ask,' I said, 'if the luck is in any way connected with this little angel here?' pointing to the baby. And she laughed and said 'Yes.'

"Well," he went on, "that's only one case. I could tell you plenty more. The gents who have backed winners after meeting me and have given me something for myself! Because there is some gratitude in the world, after all; or, at any rate, there was. I used to know more than one gent who said that he never had a bet except on the days when he had met a sweep."

"But suppose he lived opposite one," I said, "and couldn't help seeing him, would that count?"

"No," said the sweep thoughtfully. "I think it ought to be more accidental than that. Besides, gents don't live opposite sweeps. No, of course it must be accidental, because there's my missis, who sees me all the time—and no one could call her lucky. Rheumatoid arthritis isn't lucky, and she's doubled up with it. And she sees me often enough. No, I think it has got to be accidental," he repeated.

He began to collect his implements.

"Well, good morning," he said at Victoria. "I get out here. I live in the Vauxhall Bridge Road."

And he left.

Glancing round furtively to see that I was unobserved, I threw him a kiss.

THE CHARITY SONG

"I HAVE just been to a Hospital dinner," he said, "and I'm so sure that the machinery for the extraction of money from guests is not yet complete that I have been devising a new implement."

"What is it?" I asked. "A pick-axe?"

"Not in so many words," he said, "but it corresponds. No, it's a song. An argument with music. I haven't had it set yet, but I've written the argument."

"I should have thought, from my own experience of speakers at charity dinners," I said, "that they left few arguments undeveloped. We should give because the object is the most worthy that could possibly be imagined. Whatever else might be questionable, this Fund demands support. We should give not only because we are generous, but even more so because we are just. We should give because we are young, and the hospital is for the young. We should give because we are old, and the hospital is for the old. We should give because we are old and therefore shan't have many more chances to give. But you know it all."

"Yes," he said, "I know it all; but you don't. You have left out the real thing. You got near it when you said 'We should give because we are old,' but you missed the real point. You said that the old wouldn't have

'many more chances to give.' Now I am appealing to those in the audience who won't have *any* more chances to give."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"I'll read you the verses," he replied. "The time for the song is immediately after the last speech on behalf of the cause; and you want a jolly unctuous kind of fellow with an appealing voice. He might make a living going from dinner to dinner singing it. It begins:—

In the state of London traffic.

But I ought first to say that the opening line can be adapted for the provinces too. In Birmingham, or Manchester, or any of the places that have three syllables, you would say—

In to-day's congested traffic,

or

In our city's awful traffic;

but in the ordinary two-syllabled places you would simply substitute another name for London. Thus:—

In the state of Bradford traffic,

for example. In Bath you would say:—

In poor Bath's congested traffic,

or 'old Bath,' if you preferred it. Forgive me for being so minute, but I am anxious that this song should be at home wherever people's pockets are being shot at.

"Now I'll begin again:—

In the state of London traffic
  Who dare plan an hour ahead,
Since it's so extremely likely
  He will be extremely dead?
In our whirling world of motors
  Who can call his life his own?
Every crossing claims its victim:
  Hark! another dying groan!
But there is a silver lining, as we know, to every cloud:
To the wretch condemned to perish, mark the privilege allowed——

"Then the chorus, which says what the privilege is:—

When a man's to die to-morrow
  He must reckless be to-day;
All may confidently borrow,
  None be empty turned away;
When a man's to die to-morrow
  How responsive he should be
To the sacred call of Sorrow,
  To the cause of Charity!

"By this time," he said, "they've got the general idea, and of course it's a sound one. It was stated long ago, with more authority than mine: 'Eat, drink and

be merry, for to-morrow you die.' I merely apply it: 'Eat, drink and be lavish as well as merry, for to-morrow you die.' How often I've heard men next to me at dinner at the Club say, 'If I were sure I was going to die to-morrow I'd have champagne this evening; but, as I shall probably live for ever and I'm very hard up, I'll have a whisky-and-soda.' That is the notion. Very well, then, now for the second, or *ad hoc*, verse:—

It is practically certain,
  Later, in the careless street,
One of you, returning homewards,
  With an accident will meet;
You, perhaps, or you, or you, Sir;
  None can tell, but this we know:
This may be the last occasion
  Your benevolence can flow.
As it is the last occasion let it flow with all its might!
Pens and paper lie before you, and remember as you write:—
When a man's to die to-morrow
  He must reckless be to-day;
All may confidently borrow,
  None be empty turned away;
When a man's to die to-morrow
  How responsive he should be
To the sacred call of Sorrow,
  To the cause of Charity!

"'Now then, Gentlemen,' the singer will say, 'all together':—

When a man's to die to-morrow
He must reckless be to-day;
All may confidently borrow,
None be empty turned away;
When a man's to die to-morrow
How responsive he should be
To the sacred call of Sorrow,
To the cause of Charity!

"Loud applause, followed by the scratching of pens. What do you think of it?"

"I think it might be tried," I said. "I think you should find a composer."

THE FOOD OF YESTERYEAR

It is a fact sadly established in the sensory consciousness of all older people that the flavour of food, and in particular of meat, is not what it was before the War. Nothing is the same: I am aware of that; but some changes, some deteriorations, are worse than others, and I place this one in a seriously prominent position.

Not only has the flavour evaporated; the variety has gone too. We are in the hands of a ring; a conspiracy has been organized to defeat the individual taste and impel it to join the mob. London has countless restaurants; a few very dear and fashionable; a few score that are dear and not quite fashionable; and a vast number that thrive because they are cheap—the kind that every one is excited to "discover." The deplorable fact is that, save for price, all these restaurants are exactly alike in their menus; they all serve precisely the same things. Beef, mutton, veal, chicken, rabbit (called chicken), and all the rest of it, day after day, evening after evening. Eating-out has become a habit; eaters-out are so excited to be eating-out that they can be bullied into accepting anything. And the result is this dreary monotonous round of obvious dishes, which, moreover, never taste as they should, either because they are badly cooked or because they are of inferior

quality. Britons, who were never to be slaves, are slaves once more, principally to cynical Italian caterers.

Where are certain simple delicacies of yesteryear? Where is that ancient nocturnal amenity, the devilled bone? After the theatre, how agreeable it once was, too many years ago, to seek the Blue Posts in Cork Street and be sure of devilled bones! If the play had been good they came as a symmetrical savoury postscript to it; if bad, a solace. But where are bones devilled now? And, indeed, where are the bones fit to devil? Cold-storage, the friend of the modern restaurateur but the enemy of sapor generally, is peculiarly hard on them. Beef which, stiff and stark, has voyaged from distant lands and must be thawed before it is cooked, is not the beef to bring bliss to the London play-goer. Few inventions have done anything to accentuate the simpler pleasures of life, and cold-storage least.

I am feeling particularly sore on this subject because the other day a friend from India, whom I was taking round London after fifteen years' absence, and whom I wished to make happy, expressed a longing for devilled bones; and they could not be found.

"Nobody asks for them now," said head-waiter after head-waiter.

"But if you announced the fact that you always had them, what then?" I asked.

"I don't think so," he said. "People don't eat that kind of supper any more; in fact, they don't eat supper at all except when they can dance—and then they don't want much."

Farewell then to devilled bones.

And to marrow bones, too, it seems, for I found it impossible on an impulse to give my poor friend that nutriment either. Only by ordering it some time in advance could it be obtained, and then not for certain.

"Nobody asks for marrow bones now," said the head-waiter.

"But if you announced the fact that you had them, what then?" I asked.

"I don't know that we could," he said. "You can't be sure of getting them good enough. They're things that must be good to be nice at all."

"You mean," I said, "that frozen meat . . ." but here, with perfect strategy, he found himself in demand elsewhere; he had said too much.

And this, I suppose, is why every second-hand silversmith in London always has the same marrow-spoons in his window (there are some in Vigo Street that I have seen for years); no one needs them any more; just as no one seems to want punch-ladles. Alas, for a decadent world!

But the self-protective ingenuity of the restaurateurs is not all; there is a detestable snobbishness that is largely to blame. Certain dishes have become so unfashionable that if you want them—and they comprise some of the best food there is—you must either have them at home (after passages of not a little acerbity) or seek them in eating-houses where you will be too conspicuous if you do not wear your oldest clothes; because—and this is the amusing truth—the best food now belongs to the poor.

I will make a list of some of the delicacies which false shame has excluded from the West End menus.

Pig's trotters.

Here is an exquisite flavour indeed, allied to a curiously attractive texture. But where can you get them? In Paris they are served regularly in the most gilt-edged establishments, and in Paris people are supposed to know something about food, although foreigners have done much to debase its quality. But in London pig's trotters are vulgar.

Sheep's trotters.

To some extent sheep's trotters merit the eulogy that I have pronounced on the *pieds de porc:* but they are less rich. As *pieds de mouton,* accompanied by a sauce called *poulette,* they occasionally are permitted to patter into a London restaurant; but seldom. Most of them find their way down East, and remain there to spread delight.

Cow's heel.

You see how I run to extremities—but that is not my fault; I did not invent the beasts of the field and their charms. Who has eaten cow's heel? (Dead silence.) But it is exceedingly good, and in the form of calves'-foot jelly is your favourite restorative when you are ill. Calves' head you have tasted on occasion, and have liked; but cow's heel—never.

And now we come to the word of dread; the word which you have been fearing; the word which leads to the most deplorable exhibitions of affectation or ignorance: Tripe.

Let us not inquire too closely into its source; but let

those who are wise eat it and be thankful for a preparation at once so nourishing and delectable. As for the others, let them continue to shudder. A restaurant that always kept tripe, seethed in milk with its proper companions, and let the world know it, would prosper; and, incidentally, it would be an excellent place for Diogenes to carry his lantern to. There, at any rate, would he find sincerity, if not necessarily integrity, in the highest.

And that reminds me that if I possessed the three indispensable ingredients in any enterprise—time, money, and enthusiasm—I should try an experiment that I have often considered: I should open a restaurant where only one dish was served. It has been done with great success, and it could be done again, because the world is always turning round. When I first came to London there were a number of small eating-houses known as Wilkinson's, where boiled beef was the staple. It was always ready, hot or cold, and you went there for nothing else. The quality was not that of the famous *Bœuf à la mode* in Paris—Wilkinson was for a humbler purse and palate—but it was excellent in its practical, cheap way.

The Wilkinson's were many, but there was but one Tyson's. Tyson's was upstairs at the St. Paul's end of Cheapside, an offshoot of a Manchester firm which, for all I know, still flourishes. The peculiarity of Tyson's was that nothing was served but chops and steaks, and nothing was served with them but hot buttered toast. If there is anything better than a chop or steak served with hot buttered toast—I mean such chops and steaks as were in those days—I should like to know about it.

But Tyson's has gone, and gone are all the Wilkinson's; the nearest things to them in specialization are Birch's in Cornhill, with its turtle soup and oyster patties, and The (or is it Ye?) Old Cheshire Cheese in Fleet Street, with its two pudding days a week; both some distance from London's restaurant zone.

None the less, I would, had I those three necessaries of the scheme, venture a restaurant to-day that should attempt a specialization similar to Tyson's. I cannot say what the one dish would be; but my customers should be minutely informed about it by a sign-board before they entered, so that none could consider themselves ill-treated if no long *carte du jour* were set before them. Possibly the Irish Stew House; possibly The Saddle of Mutton; possibly The Pork Pie; possibly The Home of Tripe. (And such tripe!)

HOOTS

"Of course they won't get out of the way for that," said my friend, as his powerful car slackened down on our return journey by road from the delectable mountains of Dorset.

By "that" he meant the mild booming of the motor-horn, and by "they" a company of unruffled cows spreading right across the road and shambling from side to side of it: less than perturbed by our onset—deliberately disregarding it.

"If a motor-horn sounds exactly like the friendly cow herself—as this one does," he resumed, "why should she be expected to take alarm and give way? If you want to make a cow jump you must have a motor-horn that emits a sound that she dreads—such as a dog barking."

"Of course," I said. "Why haven't I ever thought of that for myself?" I added.

"What a chauffeur really wants," the road-hog continued—for he is a road-hog; in fact, you have but to scratch any motorist, however gentle in exterior, to find that animal beneath his skin—"is something like an organ with stops. Without something like that he will never get the road clear, never have all the impediments removed. For warning other motorists and for the

drivers of carts the present horn is more or less all right; but it is the infernal creatures not on wheels that are the real trouble. Here are these cows, for example" —and it is true that the obstructionist creatures were still there, although by advancing at the slowest possible pace and now and then scraping a leg or a flank with our mudguards, we were gradually cleaving the obstacle —"here are these cows undismayed by anything but a dog's bark; therefore there must be a stop in the organ to produce a bark. Next, what about sheep? The bark would probably be all right for them, too," he added, "and for cats. But obviously it would never frighten a dog. For fowls and ducks you want a sound like a fox."

"And for foxes," I said, "a sound like a pack."

He looked sternly at me. "There's no need to be funny," he said. "Who has ever been bothered by a fox? Be practical. What other animals are there that impede the progress of the gods in their machines?"

"Pedestrians," I said.

"Well, there you come to a great problem," he replied. "Because pedestrians are divided into so many varieties. For a large number the best kind of motor-horn would be a gramophone which uttered the words, in as commanding a tone as could be mustered—the original speaker could be a drill sergeant—'Stand still!' or 'Don't move!' Because it is the people who start to cross the road and then, after pausing, run on or back, who soonest reach the hospital and the tomb. If they could be turned to stone, so to speak, by the drill sergeant's decision and timbre, the chauffeur could easily steer clear of them. Do you see?"

"Perfectly," I said.

"Then there are the people who are too shrewd and cautious to be run over, but who, disliking motoring much and motorists more, do their best, by crossing very slowly, to impede them and force them to do the most depressing and ignominious thing that can happen to a driver—reduce speed. This class obviously must be frightened; but how? You must find a sound that terrifies them."

"Why not carry a revolver?" I suggested. "That surely would be simplest in the end."

"I quite agree," he said. "But the laws of this country are in such a mess that there would almost certainly be trouble. Pursuit, inquiries, inquests: unpleasant consequences, anyway. Motoring will never be the joy it was ordained to be until a lot of vexatious restrictions are removed from the Statute Book."

It was at this point that the last cow was passed and we leapt ahead.

"But we are getting into deep water," he went on. "The motorist, I fear, will always have enemies until roads are made exclusively for him and pedestrians have tunnels to grope through. May that day soon arrive! Meanwhile let cars be fitted with all the necessary stops and horns!"

At this moment our high speed suddenly vanished and our motor-horn began to fill the air with those distressing sounds which have done so much to endear this new form of traffic to rural dwellers. The cause of the delay was a leisurely motor-cyclist ahead, with a side-car attached, who was holding the crest of the road—his

only chance of a level passage—without giving the least sign of being aware that anything could be behind him wanting to pass. The side-car amateur has reduced this wilful unconsciousness to a fine art, and this exponent was masterly. He disdained pretence altogether; he put up no affectation of being absorbed in conversation with his companion. He merely went on his undeviating way with the conviction that his own trifling conveyance was the only car on that road, or on any road, or in the world.

Well, we boomed at him for two miles, until, with the faintest suggestion of a smile on the back of his head, about his huge ears, and on each of his rounded shoulders, he turned down a by-road.

My friend was black with rage.

"That's where the organ and its stops are always going to fail you," I said. "It is not pedestrians who are the motorist's worst foes; it is motorists. The triumph of the foot passenger is only momentary, but the driver of a side-car who wants to keep in the middle, right on the camber, can last out, at any rate, long enough to spoil your temper sufficiently to make your next meal disagree with you. And I expect he always will."

SECRETS

In Bruges, not so long ago, I was examining, with the assistance of the old furniture dealer, a writing-desk of some antiquity. Fine as was the workmanship, rich and rare as was the old hard mahogany (*acajou*) from which it was made, and distinguished as was its shape, the excitement of the dealer was reserved for a minor detail. A secret drawer. In point of fact, two secret drawers. It was these that rejoiced him, these that set him skipping about and uttering sounds of ecstasy. And I don't mind admitting that they delighted me too, and should I become a customer it would be the secret drawers' privilege to turn the scale. For they were exceedingly ingeniously contrived, not only in their position in the woodwork, but because two other drawers, less secret but sufficiently secret to cause an intruder to pursue his researches no further, covered their lair.

Coming away I thought again of the fascination that the word secret always exerts. "I'll tell you a secret." "Do you want to hear a secret?" "I promised I wouldn't tell a soul, but I must tell you"—how sweet these phrases are, even though the actual communication means little or nothing, even though we knew them before! For too many secrets carry no surprise with

them. "Do you want to hear a secret?" says a pretty girl, all smiles and eagerness. But what's the use when she is so ostentatiously keeping her left hand hidden behind her?

If I were in the mood to be pedantically logical, it could be shown that secrets that are told are not secrets at all. Some other word ought to be found for them. But terminological inexactitude has a thin time in a world with so active a newspaper Press as ours; and the Tenth Muse has never been able to control her passion for "secret" as a lure. Look, for example, at some of her favourite headings: "Secret History," "Secret History of the Week," "Secret History of the War," and so forth. What she means is Inner History, Hitherto Concealed History, or even Released History. Again, how we jostle each other when she offers us "Secret Revelations"; and could there be a more mutually destructive pair of words?

But "secret" will never lose its power, and for ever, when we hear of a new centenarian, and rush off to interview him—I speak as a Fleet Street adventurer myself—and he says one of the two things that men who have lasted for a hundred years always say—either that they have drunk whisky and smoked all their lives, or that neither tobacco nor spirits ever made the faintest appeal to them—we shall continue to entitle the article "Secret of Longevity." But there was no secret—the old boy had been boasting about it ever since he was eighty.

It is a pity that the word "secret" has come so often to suggest infamy, vice, or at any rate something under-

hand and discreditable, whereas it might just as well denote the other thing. Thus, when the headline "Secret Life of Dead Millionaire" greets the delighted eye, the reason for the gleam is the hope—nay, the confident expectation—of voluptuous, sordid, or sinister details. But why should not the dead millionaire have masqueraded as an angel of mercy? Why should he not, as well as his mansion in Park Lane and his manor in Surrey, his yacht and his stud, have, under another name, maintained a Home of Rest for disabled clerks? That would be a "secret life" too; but unhappily no caption writer would draw attention to it in that way: at most, "Dead Millionaire's Anonymous Benefactions." The precious word "secret" is too valuable to be wasted on virtue.

As a friend to newspaper proprietors, it has but two rivals, one of which is "Sensational" and the other "Mystery." "Mystery," indeed, is so nearly allied to "Secret" that the sub-editor must often have difficulty in deciding upon which to display; but there is a difference. A secret is a fact; a mystery is we know not what, and often merely an invention. Secrecy, however, is of course an element of it. I have no space in which to pursue this alluring side-track; but I might say that the two best newspaper secret-mysteries or mystery-secrets of my time bear out the contention that secrets should never be told; for both faded into nothingness directly they were investigated. One was the Druce coffin and the other was the Humbert safe. So long as those receptacles remained closed the thrill was magnificent: we thought of little else than the

alleged load of bricks representing the body of the eccentric Duke of Portland—half hermit and half Baker Street emporium-keeper—and the alleged untold gold in the Paris *coffre-fort.* I wish we still had those unsolved romances of real life before us, to make our days more amusing. But how insipid when the truth was known—the poor innocent Mr. Druce's remains exactly where they ought to have been, and the Humbert safe as empty as the Hubbard cupboard!

The only true secrets are those which no one else can discover: that is to say, our own, the secrets which our own bosoms keep under lock and key, known only to ourselves, to our God and, if necessary, to our lawyer. (Possibly to our lawyer's clerk, too, but that is one of those things that we never, for certain, know. Some depths must not be plumbed too far.)

But lawyers! I remember sitting at a public dinner opposite one of London't most famous legal advisers—the kind of man to whom you go only if you are guilty—and thinking what a terrible load of private information was concealed behind that gleaming shirt-front. Yet he seemed to bear it lightly enough, for he was as cheerful and conversable and convivial as anyone present. But what (I thought) a hullabaloo there would be should he suddenly lose control—he was then a great age—and begin to give his clients away! How such hostesses as were innocent would clamour for the pleasure of his company! What a rush there would be to sit near him!

It is often said that even the most scrupulous persons to whom a secret is entrusted make one exception, pass it on to one friend. This friend, I suppose, if he

is sufficiently interested, makes his exception too, and so on; and yet the phrase, "I know it's safe with you or I wouldn't tell you," continues to be used and to excite pride and pleasure in the hearer. Analysed, the desire to tell one other person is not exactly a treachery, for often the reservation, although unspoken, is understood, nor does it proceed from any uncontrollable tendency to blab. The other person—the one exception—usually is so intimate, even so beloved, as to be considered almost a part of the teller's self, or at any rate as a sharer of the teller's life and therefore a sharer of the teller's secrets too. Such special leakage is a risk which all confiders of secrets run, have run, and will run. But most of them are aware of it.

It is one of the many facile sarcasms flung at women, that they are unable to keep a secret; but my experience is that they are, at any rate, not less to be depended upon than men. There are at least as many indiscreet remarks in clubland as at mothers' meetings.

To speak of myself, I am far more interested in the light than in the dark. I can be told secrets with perfect safety, and people round me who have secrets burning their breasts can feel assured that I shall make no effort to probe them. I am still unaware of the identity both of the Man in the Iron Mask and the Gentleman with a Duster. I know that Sir Walter Scott was the author of the Waverley novels, but I am vague as to whether the writer of the "Letters of Junius" has yet been definitely traced. It was only the other day that I was more than startled by the disclosure that Mr. Arnold Bennett's first name is Enoch; and yet I have

been intimate with him all the century. This shows you!

To come back to the Bruges desk. Did I say whether I bought it or not? But that is a——

THE INVALID

My old friend Pernick was a few minutes late for lunch, and when he arrived he was pale and shaking.

Long before I could ask him what was wrong he told me.

"I've just come from Harley Street," he said. "I've been to a specialist. It's terrible. My heart's all wrong. I might go off any minute. I'm sorry if you find me a nuisance over my food, but I've got to be very particular," he said. "Only the most easily digestible things." He sighed. "It practically amounts to a death-sentence."

I shook his hand again in sympathy. "Well, we've all got to die," I said with the idea of being comforting.

"That's a very gloomy view," he replied, frowning. "And that reminds me—I must be most careful never to get ruffled, put out, the doctor said. Any sudden rage might be fatal."

"All right," I said. "And now for food. We'll find something safe, and edible too, I hope; and of course you'll have no cause for irritation. This is my lunch, anyway. Leave your hat and coat over there."

While handing his things to the attendant he talked a little with him, and I thought I caught the words "specialist" and "heart."

We went to our table and he seized the *carte du jour.*

Most waiters begin with the phrase "A nice Sole?" but this one remarked, "There's *Lobster à l' Américaine,*" hovering with pencil poised.

"Now," said Pernick peevishly, "don't tempt me. *Lobster à l'Américaine!* That's the most indigestible thing you can tackle. I've just come from a specialist in Harley Street, who says my heart's all wrong and I must be careful; and you offer me *Lobster à l'Américaine!* It's monstrous. And I adore it too!"

I put my hand on his arm to soothe him.

"Yes," he went on to the waiter, "and you're making me angry. I'm losing my temper, and that may be fatal, he says. All the same," he resumed, "I don't see why I shouldn't have some of the claws. Lobster's claws are about the most digestible things there are. It's the back that's so bad for you. And you'll see that nothing but claws are served?"

"You shall pick them out yourself," said the waiter.

"No, I'm not up to that," said Pernick. "I'm ill. That specialist rattled me. You pick them for me. You're sure you like hot lobster?" he said turning to me.

"Go ahead," I replied.

"And what will you have to follow?" the waiter asked on returning from giving the first order. "A nice chicken? A nice entrecote?"

"Well, whatever you choose," I remarked to Pernick gaily, "it won't be this!"—and I pointed to the words "*Caneton de Rouen.*"

Never was a facetious warning less successful.

"And why not?" he asked with some asperity. "Why not? Nothing's so good for you as a slice of a duck's breast, if it's tender.

"Can you guarantee that it will be tender?" he asked the waiter, although surely in a restaurant this is a question that answers itself.

"Certainly, Sir," the waiter replied.

"Then may we have duck?" he asked me. "Forgive me if I seem to be rather running this show, but on a day like this . . . I'm not quite normal, I know." He reached for the *carte du jour* with a look of infinite self-pity.

"Very well, then," he said to the waiter; "duck, tender, sage and onions, apple-sauce and sprouts, and" —he looked down the *carte*—"no sweet, but for a savoury, mushrooms and cream."

"My dear Pernick," I began in remonstrating tones.

He held up his hand. "Don't cross me," he said. "Remember, I mustn't be crossed. And what about a dry Sauterne with the lobster and a white Burgundy afterwards?"

"You order them," I said, and he did.

While we were waiting to begin, he saw our friend Richardson enter, and he sent for him.

"I've very grave news for you," he said. "You'll be bowled out by it. I've just come from a specialist in Harley Street who says my heart's all wrong."

"That's bad," said Richardson.

"Yes, but that's not the worst," said Pernick. "I've got to give up eating anything but slops—it practically comes to that. Isn't that awful?"

"Dreadful," said Richardson. "But if you're wise you'll do it. What I always say is, if you go to a specialist obey his order."

"Yes, yes," said Pernick, "I agree. I'm going to."

He enjoyed his lobster claws so much that he had a piece of the back too.

"No use being morbidly obedient to one's doctor," he said. "We're all different. A specialist seeing you for the first time can't know everything."

Unfortunately the Burgundy was not right.

"Corked, isn't it?" he asked me.

"I don't notice it," I said.

He sipped and held his head on one side with his eyes on the ceiling. Then he sipped again and held his head on the other side with his eyes closed.

"Yes," he said, "corked."

He called the wine waiter.

"This wine is corked," he said.

The waiter prepared to pour some into another glass to test it.

Pernick stopped him. "It's no use arguing," he said. "If a customer says it's corked, it's corked. Get another bottle at once."

"But—" the waiter began.

"At once!" said Pernick. "And don't make me angry. You haven't heard that I've just seen a specialist, and he says that on no account must I be made angry. Get another bottle at once. You should have backed me up," he added, turning to me.

"But—" I began.

"No," he said, "I was right. My palate never errs.

But don't let's discuss it any more, or I may get heated. They're very slow with that duck."

At this moment another of Pernick's friends passed and was stopped.

"I've got very sad news for you," said Pernick. "You'll be deeply grieved. I've just come from Harley Street, from a specialist. My heart's all wrong. Seriously wrong. And I dare say yours is, if you only knew; but the point is you don't know, and therefore you can go on having a good time. When ignorance is bliss . . . But I know, and I've got to be careful. Self-denial is my line for the rest of my life."

"You're beginning, like every one else, tomorrow, I suppose," said the new-comer with a glance at the table.

"What do you mean?" Pernick exclaimed. "Tomorrow! I'm beginning to-day. Don't be sarcastic with me; I can't stand it. The specialist told me that to be made angry might be fatal."

"I'm sorry," said his friend, and passed on.

"Cynical beast!" said Pernick. "I hate that kind of thing. And now for the duck! But I mustn't eat more than a slice or two of the breast. See that I am sensible, won't you?"

If I could not make him sensible, I could at least envy him his appetite. And then the creamed mushrooms! But to my intense relief he did not sit on after he had finished them.

"I shall have my coffee at the Club," he said, "if you don't mind. There are a lot of men there who will

want to hear about this. It'll upset them terribly, I'm afraid."

And off he went.

How little fun, I thought, can deaf-and-dumb men have when they too are sentenced to death by their doctors.

TO BE LET OR SOLD

An ingenious editor casting about for what is known to the priests who serve the Tenth Muse as "free copy" has been asking persons of eminence to tell his readers some of the things on which they have "changed their minds." I am not to be numbered among those to whom the invitation was sent, but had I been I might have replied that I no longer hold the opinion, expressed many years ago in a light-hearted essay, that looking over a house to let was a pleasure that never palled. To-day I feel differently about it: not only because I hope never to "move" again, but because I am older, because I have too many other interests, because other people either are not such a fascinating study as they used to be or I have seen enough of them and their ways. If I were ever now to turn aside and go over a house without the legitimate reason, it would be to see what pictures were in it. I should keep a very wide eye for the walls. A great many pictures now in public galleries were found in houses to be let or sold, and there are several Vermeers yet to come to light.

The amateur house-hunter, as distinguished from him who wants a house, sets out on his quest far less to see the house than its occupants. I refer, of course, to houses in which the tenants still reside: the empty

ones are negligible. Perhaps you did not know that there is so much curiosity about: that there are people with so little to do that they spend their time in "looking over" houses out of sheer idleness, inquisitiveness, or even mischief, being no more in need of a new domicile than a snail or a tortoise is, but finding a wicked joy in visiting agents' offices—perhaps morbid joy is the better phrase—and then presenting "orders to view": even, in a more than commonly depraved mood, asking the agent's young man to accompany them. How should he know, poor youth, whether their questions about the distance to the nearest post-office, the drainage, rates and taxes, and whether the vicar is high or low, ring true or not? How should he detect that they have no more intention of throwing these two rooms into one, and putting another bath, "for the maids," on the top floor, than he has of depreciating any of the undesirable "desirable" properties on his books? All, I have been told, that agents know for certain is that clients who appear to like the house they are looking at never return, but those who find fault with it may not impossibly do so.

I am not in a censorious mood, for how natural that it should be in other people, when all is said, that our principal interest resides! We may pursue this hobby or that; we may meet to discuss philosophy, psychology, religion, the new murder, or the musical glasses; we may profess an eremitical aloofness; but the proper study of mankind will continue to be man, and our real curiosity will be reserved for other people: where they live, how they live, on what terms with each other, and

how the devil they can afford a car. That poem of Robert Browning's called "House," in which an earthquake brought down the frontage only, tells the whole story:

"You see it is proved what the neighbours guessed . . ."

To prove their guesses right or wrong may be a dominant impulse of the frivolous inquisitive house-hunters; but the humorous would go, I fancy, more to hear what the present occupants say, for the people in houses to be let or sold are, more often than any others, what are known as "priceless"; and they are never more so than when they are explaining their position. Human nature is rarely so amusing as when trying to get a house off its hands. Women at this task can be untruthful enough, but their untruth lacks the infusion of candour which a skilful male liar can introduce. A woman will say that everything is all right: the house is perfect; she will regret to her dying day having to leave it, but she must; and her reasons will be sound enough: she is going only because her dividends have dropped; she has to unite in housekeeping with a widowed sister at Leamington; she is settling at Nice by the doctor's orders. But a man will ingeniously admit a fault here and there. "I'll be perfectly frank with you," he will say. (Beware of that!) Then he laughs. "Of course I'm an idiot to tell you this," he continues: "a real man of business would keep it to himself; but there are a few days in the year—not many—perhaps six all told—when the wind from

that quarter touches you up almost unbearably. Beyond that I can think of nothing. It's really a wonderful place and we're heart-broken at having to go. But this cursed Government, you know. Taxation! You're lucky to be able to take it!" Then (beware of this too) he is almost certain to add: "I wish that you would promise me one thing. If you take it and if ever you want to give it up, let me have the first chance. If things are easier then, I'll come back like a shot. You'll promise, won't you?" This is very disarming, but the genuine house-hunter must be on his guard.

There are various means by which we can learn about other people, from the pages of *Who's Who* to dinner-table gossip, but none is more amusing than to go over their houses. That is why house-hunting is among the National Sports of Great Britain, even if Henry Alken never illustrated it. To the frivolous house-hunter, as distinguished from the genuine house-hunter, an Englishman's house is his museum and his secret *dossier* combined.

But all houses are not equally the key to characters. Where some tell you everything, some tell you little or nothing: perhaps because the owner's real life is spent elsewhere. In other words, you may be in the wrong house. Where some people never seem to belong to their houses, others are intimately linked with every room. I have a friend who has moved five times in the last twenty years, but all those five houses have seemed the same to me; they have been so full of her personality that there was no room to notice anything

else. All five houses have been so characteristic of her that one felt that the address "Olga's New Home, London," should be enough for St. Martin's-le-Grand, especially after its constant boasting about the sleuths that abound there.

At the other extreme are the householders who are merely lodgers, whose homes have no more individuality than a hotel; and the hotel, of course, is the perpetual proof of the powerlessness of furniture to create atmosphere unless its own human beings are there too. For it is not enough to select an arm-chair: one must sit in it. You may take the cosiest room you know and replace everything in it, word for word, in an hotel sitting-room of the same shape and size, and instantly the spirit of comfort will evaporate. The reason, of course, is that people in hotels strike no roots. The French phrase for chronic hotel guests even says so: they are called dwellers *sur la branche.* The only way to make a house livable-in is to live in it.

I have never seen "Chequers" and am unlikely to see it unless as a visitor, but I always wonder what are the feelings of the Prime Ministers whose home it so precariously is. Do they really feel at home there? Did Mr. Baldwin knock the ashes out of that incurably public pipe wherever he happened to be, or did he cross with solemnity to the fire-place? For what one does with tobacco ash is the ultimate test. Speaking for myself, I could never be at home in a house if I had no sense of security as to my tenure of it. No one can have that in the last final sense, of course, because of the beating, increasingly loud as we grow older, of the

Angel's wing; but (short of death) without any stable feeling how can one bring oneself to tell the builder to put a cowl on the smoking chimney, or the carpenter to mend the shutter? These are the things we do for ourselves or not at all; certainly not for the fellow who is going to turn us out at the next election.

"Chequers," itself, will that too one day be to let or sold? Will there always be Prime Ministers in that genre? The surrender of Devonshire House a year or so ago was a great shock; and Mayfair's inclination to follow suit can be learned by a walk to-day through any of its once so secure streets, where the agents' boards are as thick almost as the forest from which they were cut. The thought of the rich and the luxurious and the deeply-entrenched giving up their mansions leads to the other extreme. History, I fancy, does not relate what became of the simplest residence of all—the tub of Diogenes—when it was vacant after his death. It would be amusing to know. Was it cut up into souvenirs for young cynics—chips of the old homestead—or were efforts made to find a new tenant? I seem to see the advertisement: "To be let or sold (by order of the executors of Diogenes, deceased) commodious, well-appointed, old-world tub. Would suit gentleman of retiring habits. May be viewed by appointment. Apply Messrs. Steady and Steady, Athens." Perhaps the Prime Ministers of the not too distant future will be lodged thus.

NOISE

The world is confronted just now by a curiously contradictory state of things, when the pleasure of the ear is being cultivated as never before—and has, indeed, called new industries into being—while never were the conditions of life in our cities and on high roads so discordant and nerve-shattering. The figures that I am alert to suggest are, of course, far too low, but let us assume that every day a hundred new motorists come into being, part of whose occupation, if not desire, it will be, with their hooters, to impair the aural faculties of the thousand people who every day buy a gramophone or install wireless.

And yet, will they effect that injury? They ought to, by all the rules, but will they? I fancy not. I find very little evidence that we really are (as we ought to be) the worse for so much racket and disturbance. Personally detesting noise, I am shocked by the quickness with which I can get used to it and, indeed, disregard it.

The human ear must be a very wonderful piece of mechanism for it to continue, in the midst of chaos and babel, as sensitive, as little dulled, as it is. Logically, you would suppose, those of us in London who are old enough to have seen the entry and rise of the

motor-car, the increase in traffic, and latterly the introduction of that terrible pavement-breaking engine which the navvies now operate, ought to be either stone deaf or badly damaged. But I have not learned that deafness is on the increase, or that the national temper grows more jumpy. I am not acquainted with any deaf chauffeur, although those who never know the way are certainly on the increase; boiler-makers, who are alleged to sleep while riveting and wake up only when the hammering stops, cannot be deaf, or they would not know it had stopped; all of which goes to show that our auriculars are marvellously made and Providence should receive marks for them.

A further proof of the adjustability of the ear is the continued liveliness of the Latin peoples; for if London is noisy, Paris and Florence and Milan (where the drivers hoot almost continually, whether there is need or not) are pandemonium itself. In London, however, you may occasionally see a passer-by wince, or an expression of disgust or even despair cross a face, as the klaxons are more than commonly numerous and vocal (there is one like a dying sea-lion); but in Paris and Florence, never. There are narrow streets in Florence near the Duomo where the trams, by their screeching, assail the ear and by their proximity to the pavement endanger life itself, but no Florentine appears to mind.

It is true that the Florentines no longer paint "Primaveras," or design Medici chapels, and possibly we may find here the chief part of the penalty that noise exacts. Germany (whose philosopher Schopenhauer in

his essay on noise demanded the punishment of every carter who cracked his whip) no longer puts forth any Beethovens or Heines; France no longer gives us a Dumas or an Offenbach; England is without any successor to Shakespeare or Milton. Can such poverty be the result of the callous brutal cacophony of modern life? Certainly it is true that your thinker's first thought is to be remote from distraction: Thomas Carlyle, for instance, with his double doors and double windows and felt-lined walls, and Herbert Spencer, with his earflaps to shut out idle talk.

There is further testimony to the resistance of our ears to the assaults of discord, for if, according to Wordsworth, beauty born of murmuring sound can pass into the face, the converse ought also to be true and the absence of this harmony lead to ugliness. But I am not satisfied that there are more plain women (men's looks never count on these occasions) than there used to be when the world was less turbulent. If one sees fewer pretty girls, it is probably due to the fact that one expects too many. This is because all women now wear the same youthful clothes, and it therefore oftener happens than it used to that the face beneath the hat in front of you, when overtaken, can disappoint. But, speaking generally, I don't think beauty is on the decrease.

If Schopenhauer, by the way, felt like that about ordinary waggoners, what would he have said to the bank clerk who now dashes through English villages on an explosive motor-bicycle at fifty miles an hour —one of the commonest objects of our latter-day

country-side? A motor-bicycle with an internal malady can be the second noisiest thing that I know; the noisiest is an aeroplane with a propeller on each side. Passengers in the cars of such machines have cotton-wool served out to them to break the shock; but it does little enough. On the only occasion on which I have entrusted my existence to the air—coming from Paris to London—all communication had to be made in writing.

If an aeroplane is the height of noise, what is the height of silence? I should say there is no silence to equal that which you experience in a sleeper at night on a Continental train when a stopping place is reached and to the long-drawn sigh of relief emitted by the pneumatic brakes utter stillness succeeds. There is nothing to surpass it, partly because it is stillness complete, and partly because it has suddenly followed upon the steady heavy grinding jolts of the wagon-lit. Like the boiler-maker, you wake only when it ceases. Sometimes the pause seems to last for hours, unbroken save now and then by a deep throaty foreign voice. No passengers ever get in or out, there is no sound of coaling or watering the engine. Why the train stops so much in the blackness of the night has always been a mystery. Can it be an act of grace to let us over-sophisticated heirs of the ages know what absence from noise is like?

YORICK

Last autumn I chanced to be on the road from York and Durham charged with the agreeable errand of conveying a large cake to a small boy. The small boy was at school some few miles off the highway between those noble cities, and, although the highway is fairly direct, never have I met with byways that so curved and doubled, rose and fell, as those that we were lost in almost directly the diversion began. But I forgive them, every one, for the reason that in the course of our meanderings we came to a steep village with a church at the top, and on inquiring learnt that its name was Coxwold.

"Coxwold!" I exclaimed, seeing in a flash the figures of Corporal Trim, of the Widow Wadman, of Uncle Toby, and even of the Recording Angel. "Let me out at once!" For it was at Coxwold that much of *Tristram Shandy* and all *The Sentimental Journey* were written.

Sterne's home, "Shandy Hall," as he called it, is above the village, and is, as one might guess, that ancient and crumbling gabled house opposite the church —a veritable "Crazy Castle"—and nothing can be much changed since he held and neglected this living. The church, which is small and not too cheerful,

and set in one of the bleakest parts of England, is, so far as I could ascertain, without any visible record of its famous pastor. Nor, should I guess, does his spirit much haunt there. I ascended to his pulpit and imagined what it must have been like for this most whimsical and mundane of clerks in holy orders to see beneath him threescore stolid Yorkshire countenances prepared to receive spiritual comfort. When, meeting the sexton's wife, I asked if the clergyman there had not once been the Rev. Laurence Sterne, she summoned up such a frown while saying that she had heard so, that I realized that Yorick's sprightly absenteeism and amorous levity are probably still remembered against him, although so many years have passed.

This Coxwold experience filled me with the wish to read *The Sentimental Journey* again, and no sooner was I in a book-shop zone than I set about obtaining a copy—for a long while in vain. And then re-reading it I was disappointed, and wondered how it strikes the readers of to-day coming to it for the first time; how a reviewer would now deal with it. Periodically, I suppose, we ought all of us to re-examine the gods of our youth, even if we do not go so far as the unidentified cynic who said that he signalized the publication of a new book by reading an old one. *The Sentimental Journey* is, of course, deliciously written. To Sterne, good, easy, flexible English came as naturally as to Thackeray, but unless you are more interested in the personality of the sentimentalist than I am, you will think a great many of his supple sentences a waste.

"No man," said Sam Weller, "never see a dead

donkey, 'cept the gen'l'm'n in the black silk smalls as know'd the young 'ooman as kep' a goat; and that was a French donkey, so werry likely he warn't won o' the reg'lar breed." I wish we had the opinion of this shrewd critic on the whole book, instead of only on a part. That Sam should have found time and inclination to read it at all is one of the mysteries of Literature, but it is a tragedy that his reference to it is confined to two (or possibly three) incidents: to the episode of the dead ass at Nampont, to the meeting with Maria at Moulines, and—I am taking a hint from the reference to the silk smalls—to "The Case of Delicacy" in the roadside inn near Lyons.

The Sentimental Journey was Sterne's last work. The travels which it describes occupied a few months at the end of 1765, but he had earlier spent much time in France, in 1762-3, and remembered that, too. He was a long while considering the form of the book, which, short as it is, was not finished till the end of 1767. In January of 1768 he was in London superintending the publication, which occurred on February 27, 1768. The book was received with fervour. Early in March, Sterne, who was then just fifty-five, contracted influenza and on the 18th he died in his lodgings, in Bond Street, at what is now No. 41, at Mercow's, the furrier's. He was buried in the cemetery of St. George's, in the Bayswater Road, but the body was stolen by resurrection men, sold to a professor of anatomy at Cambridge, and recognized by a stranger in the dissecting room. "Alas, poor Yorick!" did he say? "I knew him well."

Sam Weller read *The Sentimental Journey*, let us say when he was twenty. I wish, if he lived so long, we could have his verdict after a reperusal in the fifties. He might be as sad about it as I am; for sadness is what we feel when confronted by this change in our old friends. I remember a conversation with that most fastidious critic, Mrs. Meynell, when she was suffering from a revulsion of feeling against *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and she was miserable about it all. She had wanted to go on, all her life, thinking of Goldsmith's idyll as gold and she had found it tinsel. And the other day I found a venerable friend —also a critic of world-wide fame—almost in tears because *Persuasion* was turning out to be less than he used to think it.

I say "change in our old friends," but I suppose the truth is that the change is in ourselves and our environment. When I first read *The Sentimental Journey* I was forty years younger; it seemed to me lively, amusing, and audacious. Since then, I have grown older. Even more so, the world has grown older and shifted its points of view. There has been an eye-opening and fibre-coarsening war, which, among other transformations, has converted Sterne's audacity to puerility, and most of his sly self-revelation to unimportant egotism. Not that it was any better then, but his readers didn't know; they were not ready.

Of course *The Sentimental Journey* must not be dismissed by an expression of one reader's personal disappointment. We have to remember not only that it has admirable passages of wit, fugitive beauty, and

discernment ("strokes of delicacy," said Horace Walpole, who found *Tristram Shandy* a bore); vignettes of travel that still stand alone; and the whole of the episode of the passport made out to Yorick, the King's jester: but also that it was the first work of its kind, and originators must always be respected. As it happens, no one has done the thing again, although many have tried. How could they, for this is the most personal of books; and they were not Sterne? The least assiduous of apes may imitate a man's approach; but he cannot reproduce the mind.

But what Sterne's derivatives have done for us is to be more interesting. Sterne is a poor story-teller; he twists and turns, and changes his point of vision, which is chiefly concentrated within, and lets too much of the salient drama escape. When he has a real human figure to rejoice in, and room in which to rejoice, as with Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim in *Tristram Shandy*, he need fear no foe. But *The Sentimental Journey* is different. Also in the case of that book Sterne suffers from an even more serious injury than change in ourselves and change in the world; he is suffering from his literary rivals, his own progeny. The taste of our day has not yet abandoned Kinglake in *Eothen*, which surely would not have been cast quite in the way it was but for *The Sentimental Journey*. Yet, compared with R. L. S., the appeal of Kinglake is comparatively non-existent, and Sterne finds it hard to compete with *An Inland Voyage* and the *Travels with a Donkey*. And what about Mr. Belloc's *Path to Rome?*

THE CATHEDRAL VERGER

After seeing York and Durham in the agreeable company of informative and enthusiastic vergers, I am newly aware of how necessary is the part that these functionaries play. Indeed, so far as the curious week-end visitor is concerned, that part is all. Bishop and dean, canon and minor canon, what are they to those of us whose delight it is to loiter in aisles before tomb and window, to stray along cloisters and to descend among Roman or even Saxon remains in the crypt? Nothing. Nor do we too much desire the verger; but we have to have him, and, this being the case, "Let him," we say, "be good." Now both at York and at Durham the vergers were good.

A cathedral verger must, of course, have certain qualities which a parish church verger can do without. He must know, or, at any rate, appear to know, something of architecture; he must suggest the antiquary; he must have enough expository manner to be able to make himself heard and understood, and enough sense of authority to keep in their place those rebels (constantly occurring) who are either facetious or who rather angrily want to know why there is a charge to see any part of a public place of worship. Very few men possess, together with a certain grave or

reverend mien, these gifts; those that do are apt to become cathedral vergers. Your parish church verger needs less; so long as he is decent and sober he can verge.

The York verger into whose sympathetic hands I am glad I chanced to fall is in appearance and manner almost more ecclesiastical than the minster itself; for that beautiful building, although a stronghold of the faith, has, as you are aware, cheerful glints of light through glass that is always lovely and often gay, whereas this verger, a massive man, was dressed in a kind of black cassock with a clerical collar, and he diffused solemnity. Had I learned that he was the Archbishop in disguise I should not have been surprised.

There are many constituents of the art of cathedral verging; but almost chief of them is the gift of saying things as though for the first time. Too few vergers have tried to master this, but my York official had it in perfection. I did not ask him how long he had been leading visitors round the building, but it was plain that he was an old, old hand; yet his comments, probably not varying by a syllable, had a hint of spontaneity, an air of freshness. At Durham, however, there was no effort at such irrelevancies; the verger there struck attitudes and reeled off both information and jest with shameless mechanism. But he is a good friend to his fane, none the less: his admiration is genuine, and when it comes to the hero and to the villain of the piece (so to speak) he becomes more than instructive, amusing.

You know the legend of Durham—how through three

or four centuries little companies of the monks of Lindisfarne, after carrying the coffin of their sainted Bishop, Cuthbert, from pillar to post seeking a safe burial-place, at last fixed upon Durham? The church in which the Saint was laid was not the same glorious structure that now rises from the precipice above the Wear, but vestiges of it may be traced. All this, and more, the verger relates, precisely, but without emotion or feeling. It is when he comes to St. Cuthbert's misogyny that a note of relish creeps in, for the Saint, you must know, is alleged—not, I believe by his biographer, the Venerable Bede, who also is buried here, but by tradition—to have hated women, and, indeed, still to hate them. In his life, being an exemplary pietist, even an anchorite, St. Cuthbert necessarily had little to do with the fair, except as abbesses or nuns, patronesses or penitents, but tradition states that his avoidance amounted to a hostility and that it has posthumously magnified. The legend may have originated in the necessity of explaining why the Lady Chapel, which is normally at the east end of a cathedral, is, at Durham, at the west end. Anyway, the Saint is credited with forbidding women to do more than occupy a mere strip of any church with which he had to do. Many stories exist as to what happened to those who were so rash as to disobey this ordinance and trespass farther, and it is when the time comes to introduce such anecdotage that the Durham verger really finds his form.

If we call St. Cuthbert his hero, who is his villain? It will give you an idea of the loyalty and zeal of

this excellent creature when I say that in his eyes the unpardonable sin is bad architecture. His villain then naturally becomes James Wyatt (1746-1813), who was known even to his own casual contemporaries as "The Destroyer" and whose activities are now, in our more intelligent day, increasingly deplored. Every age has its despoiling renovator, but Wyatt seems to have excelled all others, and Durham bears scars of some of the cruellest wounds that he inflicted. At every turn the verger points to a new infamy.

This is the Wyatt who, during Benjamin West's tiff with the Royal Academy in 1804-5, became temporary P.R.A. It was he who made Gothic fashionable by building Fonthill for Alderman Beckford; if you would see an example of his less fantastic manner look at White's Club in St. James's Street. He was surveyor to Westminster Abbey; he restored at Lincoln and Salisbury, Hereford and Lichfield, and, indeed, everywhere; but he could do no right, or so the Durham verger holds. I never heard anyone, not even Wyatt's successor in the same trade, the late Sir Gilbert Scott, so vilified.

I parted from the verger at the famous north door, over which Wyatt constructed a new porch: famous because it bears the great knocker at which the trembling hands of fugitives from justice (could they get so far) fumbled for sanctuary. A monk was always on duty in a little gallery above, and directly he heard the knock, down he came to "let poor Hilary in." The pursuers might not pass beyond the railings of the cathedral lawn; but their bullets might; and you

see a hole in the knocker's rim made by one of them as the refugee waited. You see also the recess in the building in which was the cell where he might remain in safety for thirty-seven days—and then God help him indeed, for man would not!

"It is a pity the old custom has died," I said. "To afford this kind of shelter was one of the highest privileges of the Church. Even Wyatt would have a claim on your mercy. I like to think of him knocking at this door, and you running to open it."

"Wyatt?' he exclaimed. "Me give Wyatt sanctuary! Not if I know it."

THE GEOGRAPHICAL MEAL

Breakfast-table conversation is notoriously unexciting, wavering between moroseness, or, at any rate, gloom, when the family is alone, and artificial high spirits and facetiousness when there are visitors. But I was at breakfast the other day in a house where there was some really interesting talk. Not on my part, but my host's and hostess's; I merely listened.

It proceeded from the circumstance that all the articles on the table had been collected from different places, not necessarily on the honeymoon, but on various little travels since; and I was told the history of each. Although everything had come from a different place, they had this point of resemblance, that the shop where they had been bought was always "little," and usually old, and, oddly enough, the dealers were usually either old men or old women, and invariably little too. For example, the red and purple Masonware cream jug came from "that fascinating little old shop at Brighton—in East Street, isn't it?—opposite the best Chelsea buns, anyway—where there is always lace and coloured glass in the window"; while the butter-dish had been bought in an equally fascinating little shop in the Rue Tronchet, "on the left as you leave the back of the Madeleine."

"Yes, and the ivory caddy came from there, too," my host interjected.

"Oh, Will,' said his wife, "how you do get things muddled! Why, that tea-caddy came from Tonbridge. Don't you remember? When the car broke down and we had so long to wait and spent all that money at that little furniture shop with the funny little old man?"

"I remember spending money," he said, "but I'd forgotten on what."

"Anyhow, Will," said his wife, "you can't go wrong over the sugar tongs. You remember that delightful little old shop in Bath, on the way up the principal street: one of the houses that stick out. It's on the other side to Mallet's, but lower down. The sugar tongs came from there, and this jug for hot milk came from the little old shop at Salisbury on the right as you go into the Close."

"Are you sure?" Will asked. "My recollection is that we bought that at Winchester, at the little old shop at the corner of the street just before you come to Jane Austen's house."

"No," said his wife, holding up the cold milk jug. "This is what we bought there."

"I dare say," he said. "Your memory is better than mine, and all cathedral cities are the same to me."

And so they went on, rekindling in me old desires to explore again provincial curiosity shops—surely one of the most amusing pastimes that exist. In London the dealers know too much and ask too much; but in the country one at any rate feels on firmer

ground. It is probably a delusion. Certainly I doubt if the little old men and the little old women who carry on their trade in the shadow of cathedrals are as guileless as they look. Nowadays, called into being largely by the American invasion, there are so many of these rivals that one marvels how they subsist. Can it be by selling each other Toby jugs and warming-pans?

"Where did the bread plate come from?" I asked.

That was from Munich, and the marmalade pot was from Rotterdam, and the two silver salt-cellars from a sale at Dumfries, and the tablecloth came from Milan, and the little lace mats were Binche from Malines. And nearly all had been acquired from little old men or little old women in little old shops: all but the toasting fork, which was made to order by the village blacksmith at Deans Prior, in Devon, where Herrick once was pastor. Little old men are not strong enough to be blacksmiths.

As for the breakfast service proper, that had been bought at a shop in Seville, across the bridge.

"Yes," said my host, "and do you remember what a surprise it was to us, when the bill for the crockery came, to find what the dealer's name was?"

"What was it?" I asked.

"You'd never guess," he said. "The same name as one of our most distinguished statesmen. Why a Seville dealer in earthenware shouldn't be named Asquith I don't know; but you wouldn't expect it."

I am omitting any reference to the other interpolations concerning the occasions on which these articles

were bought; but during the meal my host and hostess travelled again hundreds of miles and recalled as many incidents of each voyage. And here again the diminutive adjective governed: the sacristans who had been so amusing and attentive in the churches and cathedrals were all "little"; the head waiters were "little"; the chambermaids, with the funny broken English, were "little."

Before we rose from that table we had been all over Europe, but it sounded like Lilliput.

How great an improvement, I thought, on the old facetious system of calling coffee-pots and sugar basins and other domestic articles after the persons who had given them as wedding presents. "Please pass Aunt Selina" is a joke that can pall very quickly.

"And what about this pepper-mill?" I asked.

My host and hostess exchanged portentous glances.

"You may well ask," he said. "That pepper-pot marks one of the dark spots in my poor wife's career. Tell him."

"No, you," said my hostess.

"Well," he said, "briefly and crudely, she stole it. She put it in her bag in a restaurant in Rome, when the waiter wasn't looking."

"Can this be true?" I inquired, severely.

"I'm afraid so," she replied. "But we had been grossly overcharged and we hadn't enjoyed our lunch. Besides, it was so attractive, don't you think? I like it. Don't you?"

"Very much," I said, "and if you should chance to miss it you'll know where it is and have a very poor

case for recovering it. I hope that is your only instance of theft."

"Souvenir hunting," she murmured.

"As long as I can help it," said her husband, "it's the last. I never was in such a funk in my life, for fear some one had noticed it."

"But it is attractive, isn't it?" she repeated.

Woman! Woman!

FATE MALEVOLENT

"It is idle to tell me," said the stern man, "that Fate is merely a tissue of undirected caprice. I am as persuaded that we can be the conscious sport of Chance as you are that Chance is blind. I had another proof of it only last week.

"Last week," he continued, "it was my bad fortune to lose the last tooth in my lower jaw, and as with the last tooth went the plate also, for a few days I was a pitiable object.

"Now, I don't want to probe into dark secrets, but I dare say that some of you know what a plate is, and are aware that, in order to pronounce certain words, especially those beginning with sibilants, two rows of teeth are important.

"Very well, then. I come to my point.

"You say that Chance is blind, that the Fates are innocent of deliberate mischief and malice. In that case will you explain why it is that it was not until I was without my full speaking apparatus that I found myself in a company that was discussing poetry and that foolishly referred to me as an authority? And it isn't as if they were discussing poets that have honest patronymics, such as Browning and Blake and Bridges and Byron and Marlowe and Marvell and Moore and

Drummond and Patmore and Pope. I did all I could to keep the conversations to such as these; but in vain.

"I ask you if it was not through some malignant and supernaturally diabolical pre-arrangement, rather than accident, that, within a few moments of sitting down, the lady next to me asked me to tell her the name of Mr. A. E. Housman's most famous book? This work has been published for years and no one ever required me to mention its title before. They have always known it. Why should it happen on one of the first days of my life on which to say 'Shropshire' was an impossibility? Tell me that.

"I made some sort of an effort, but only to be further humiliated, for she then asked me what was my favourite place in Mr. Housman's county. Now, my favourite places are Shrewsbury and Church Stretton; but do you think I tried to say so? Not I. I said Ludlow, and in saying so told a lie and betrayed Salop.

"I again pass over some fairly thin ice, of which Shakespeare and Shelley were the constituents, and come to a final treachery on my part, forced upon me by the same inquisitive female. 'That beautiful poem called *The Song of Honour*,' she said; 'do tell me the name of its author.'

"Now nobody has much better reason than I to know that it is by Mr. Ralph Hodgson. But put yourself in my place— you who also have suffered from the new wholesale dentistry. To us, of all names, 'Hodgson' is the worst, as in a second's time, mentally rehearsing it, I discovered. And here we have malevolent Fate again. The *Shropshire Lad* question might

just possibly have been chance; but the *Song of Honour* question coming so soon after settled everything. Clearly I was being pursued; I was a victim; the naughty gods were in want of something to make them laugh.

"You who have been plateless too, what would you have done? There were two courses. One was to feign ignorance and say, 'I've forgotten'; the other was to take refuge among the friendly labials and pull the lady's leg. I took the second course. 'Wasn't it Binyon?' I replied.

"That was the end of that ordeal. But I was not through yet; the gods not having enjoyed sufficient mirth, worse was to come. Later in the evening my hostess, who is fond of abstruse matters, was speaking of a remarkable case of clairvoyance which she had read in the paper. She produced the cutting, but, finding that she had left her glasses somewhere, she asked me to be so good as to read it. You who know what it is to be without the lower row, will give me all your sympathy when I say that the first sentence began, 'A very curious instance of the working of what may be called the sixth sense'—and so on. But I did not get as far even as that. No sooner did my eye, foraging ahead, alight upon 'sixth sense' than I extemporized the finest coughing fit of my life and passed the cutting to a neighbour.

"Blind chance indeed! Intentional mischief every time!"

THE ETERNAL PROBLEM

As I was walking the other day down a Campden Hill road, very obviously on my way to Kensington High Street, an odd thing happened: I heard a whistle behind me, and looking round was conscious that a fat man in his shirt sleeves, whom I had just passed at an area gate—unmistakably a butler—was beckoning to me. I hesitated, thinking in my superior way that there must be some error. But no, it was at me that he was gesturing; and so I went back, when with many apologies he asked me if I would tell a cabman at the nearest rank to come to such and such a house. He would go himself, he added, but he was rather lame.

Well, I said I would, and on the way I thought much about the unusualness of the request: why it was unusual; why it should be unusual; by what right I had in the least resented it; what other men less amenable would have done. I thought how very lame he must be to have been able to overcome the ordinary reluctance of servants to call for assistance in this manner—off their own plane, so to speak; I thought of the gulf normally fixed between butlers in their shirt sleeves and people who wear the kind of coat that —with no wish or intention of marking class distinction—I chanced to be wearing. For when all is said, it is coats that determine social position, and, if they

are good enough, make it very difficult for fat butlers in shirt sleeves to whistle to strangers who are wearing them and to use them as messengers. I must assume that my expression was so benign that it cancelled Old Burlington Street's sartorial efforts; although that is not what is commonly said of it.

But most of all I found myself thinking of what is called the servant problem in general and the difficulty that so many persons (although by no means all) seem to be having, first in persuading young women and young men to come to their houses, and then to keep them there; and I wondered how much of this difficulty was the fault of the employers.

Most articles on this problem adopt an attitude hostile to the servant, or, at any rate, if not hostile they suggest that anyone who prefers to lead a free evening and free Sunday life, even under irksome factory or shop conditions, rather than to subscribe to the restrictions of a household, with fixed evenings off and so forth, is unreasonable. That is the word: unreasonable. This is largely because the writers of the articles are usually those who are in the position of employers. My own view is that the wish of these young people to have more control of their own evenings and Sundays is natural, and I sympathize with it, but I also think they are wrong. I think that most of them would be much happier if they served for a while in families; and although no doubt there are houses where discord and suspicion and impatience and even intolerance rule upstairs, I should guess that most families get to be quite good company.

As a matter of fact, domestic servants are better off than most of their employers, for they have few of their worries. Some of them have to cook the food and some have to carry it to table; but all of them eat of it later, and none of them have to pay for it, as the master of the house does. They have no anxiety about their meals, none about their lodging, none about income tax. Their wages are regular. They always have a fire, whereas far too many mistresses indulge the distressing habit of allowing the calendar to control the heating of their own rooms: even the English calendar, and we know what a one-eyed affair that can be! Servants even have their laundry paid for. If only they knew what the privileges of an ordered and protected life were, they could be the happiest creatures alive, instead of too often specializing in grumbling and discontent, and complaining of the distance to the nearest cinema, and giving notice.

They ought to think themselves lucky indeed to be lodged, nourished and paid, in perfect security, in return for a few trifling services. I know that often, when that mixture of weariness and financial panic to which writers are susceptible attacks me, I wish I was in the soft job of my friend James, who is called a butler but is really the beneficent tyrant of one of the nicest houses in England, situated among pine-trees and herbaceous borders, with a cellar by no means to be sneezed at and no questions asked.

If anybody had any real liberty, any real independence, and owed subservience to no one, then the reluctance of people to be servants would be more un-

derstandable. But since we are all servants. . . . ! Whenever I hear the suggestion that to be a servant is a humiliation I think of the highest personages in the land. If ever there were overworked servants, eternally engaged in performing offices of which they must be heartily tired, but doing them well and cheerfully, despite the exacting nature of some of them, it is the King, the Prince of Wales, and other members of the Royal Family.

I have never been a domestic servant, but I have done enough amateur cooking to have for professional cooks an admiration that can hardly be set down in words: first, for the fact that they can cook at all under the conditions of heat that an ordinary kitchen knows, and then, and even more, for their ability to preserve the rhythm of the meal: to send up not only the joint, but the accessories that go with it, at the same time, and to allow no long intervals in between. A cook who, on the day of a big dinner party, can keep her head, keep her temper, but keep no guest waiting, is a great master.

Nor is my admiration confined to cooks. I admire pretty parlour-maids, too, and know how charming they can be, especially when they are charming. In fact, any servant who can smile is in an enviably strong position.

As for employers, it is impossible to lay down any hard-and-fast rule. There are strange anomalies in this matter, and where one employer can do nothing right, another, and presumably a very selfish one, can do nothing wrong. The art of dealing with servants

is one of the rarest, and I am not sure that it has not to come as much by chance as that of painting or music: one has it or has it not; it cannot be acquired. Without it you will never have good service: with it you can get what you like out of the staff, no matter how unjust your demands seem, to others, to be. That bugbear of the basement, "overwork," is hardly mentioned in houses where this art flourishes, however incessant the work may be.

A wise woman to whom I was speaking on this question said that in her opinion the mistake that too many mistresses make is not to allow for individual peculiarity in servants. "Too many mistresses who are untrained," she said, "tell their trained servants how to do things; which obviously is absurd. A housemaid has been prepared for her task, and has her notion of how to carry it out, and probably would carry it out very well in her own way. But she is not allowed to; a mistress who has never been a housemaid in her life orders her about. This annoys her, even exasperates her, and the mischief is done." That seems to me to be logical. "Again," the oracle went on, "there is far too much adherence to cast-iron rules. In how many houses has the rose room to be done on Thursday and the blue room on Friday? But supposing the housemaid didn't want to do the rose room on Thursday—she might not be feeling well, she might have bad news from home, she is as entitled to moods as anyone else—what harm would be done? The room would be cleaned all right, even though the time-table were a little dislocated. Elasticity is imperative," she concluded.

My own experience is that the mistresses who are best attended to by their servants, and who keep them longest, are those who exact most work and most alacrity from them, and who maintain the sharpest division between upstairs and downstairs. The best servants much prefer to have this gap; they are shocked when what are called gentlefolk shake hands with them.

But it is a delicate matter on which to generalize, for there are also the servants who are miserable if no bouquets are flung to them. Those persons who were sent to the persual of *Tancred* by the recent stage version of that novel, or who had known it before, will remember the scene early in the story where the famous chef breaks down in his great task of preparing the coming-of-age banquets because he has received no word of gratitude or encouragement from his ducal employer. He had strained every nerve to make a marvellous dish, but not a sign that it had given pleasure had reached him. And then the tactful Lord Eskdaile intervenes and completely transforms his gloom into sunshine by reminding him that he is more than a chef; he is an ambassador of culture; that these barbarians are not ready yet, but that as they taste and partake of his creations they will acquire reasonableness and civilization. The chef beams to hold so high a mission. And, true enough, the next day the Duke sends for him and expresses his satisfaction, and all is joy.

All servants are not conscious artists, and all households do not contain a diplomatist like Lord Eskdaile;

but all servants have their jobs and make some kind of effort to perform them, and all households contain some one that corresponds to the Duke, and no harm would be done if praise were bestowed as often as possible (and even a little more) rather than as seldom.

THE COMPLETE INTRODUCER

I AM persuaded of this, that the whole manner of introductions at luncheon and dinner parties must be revised. A spirit of thoroughness must come in.

The other day, for example, I sat at lunch next to some one on whom I had no line whatever. Her name, which I mis-heard, as I nearly always do, conveyed nothing to me, and we talked odds and ends in a desultory way and were of no use to each other. Afterwards I discovered that she was the wife of a public man for whose work for the blind I have a peculiar admiration, and on this subject I could probably have induced her to be very interesting.

I feel the risks of missing the best of one's partners to be so serious that I have drawn up a scheme for hosts and hostesses which ought to add enormously to the amenities of the table.

I will suppose you to be a man and a guest. As you enter the house or the room—the house is better, because you will have more time to apprehend the matter—you will be handed a card which will run something like this:—First, your name. Then, "You will have on your right Mrs. Travis Remington. Her husband is alive and they are still neither separated nor divorced. He is a railway magnate. Mrs. Rem-

ington's special interests are gardening and water-colour painting. All her children are living.

"On your left will be Miss Rachel Twist, who once had a play about Savonarola produced by the Stage Society. She lives in Florence in the spring and summer, and is an authority on the Renaissance."

With this information compactly to hand, you would know where you were, and could tackle either lady with confidence and the certainty of making no particular *faux pas*, while it is possible that from both, since you know their strong suits, you might even acquire something.

Meanwhile each of these ladies has been handed a card, on which you and another man are described. Thus, Mrs. Travis Remington is informed, "You will have seated on your right Sir Alfred Carver, the famous surgeon. But besides being a surgeon, specializing in the brain, and the owner of one of the best collections of Japanese lacquer, he is an enthusiastic humanitarian and he keeps a number of old and useless horses at his place near Camberley, where they spend their last days in comfort. Sir Alfred is happily married but has no family."

Every one will appreciate the necessity of mentioning these last details, so much conversation now turning upon the marital bond in its various degrees of severity or freedom.

The notice to Mrs. Travis Remington then describes you:

"On your left will be Mr. Archie Punchible, who is a bachelor much in demand in society. He has never

been known to eat at home any meal but breakfast, and that only from Tuesday to Friday. He has travelled much in the East."

Miss Rachel Twist's card naturally must begin with you:

"On your right will be Mr. Archie Punchible," etc., repeating what we have just seen, and then, "On your left will be Mr. Adrian Scoper, who is an amateur of music and one of the first authorities on Scriabine and other modern Russian composers. He knew Tschaikowsky personally. He also has some very remarkable aviaries of small birds and talking parrots. He is a widower."

Thus informed, Mrs. Travis Remington and Miss Rachel Twist should know how to play their neighbours, and some not wholly meaningless conversation should result.

I admit that the scheme will give hosts and hostesses a lot to do; but then guests, if they are worth asking, are worth thought and trouble. The real difficulty will come when some one cries off and there is a last-minute substitute. But that might lead to amusing misunderstandings, and these are always to be desired.

IN ALL SOBRIETY

We were mentioning—within reason—the occasion in our lives when we had been made to look most foolish. It is a good subject for conversation, so long as people are truthful.

Various contretemps had been related, and then came the turn of the Doctor.

"Even you," I said, "for all your owlish wisdom and self-protectiveness have been caught out once, I'm sure."

"Of course," he replied. "Even I. In fact, I haven't lived it down yet, although thirty years have passed. I have a brother who still has to hold on to something to keep him steady whenever he refers to it.

"It was soon after I had gone into practice. One day, by a mistake on the part of the maid, a man was shown into my consulting-room, who, instead of being, as I expected, a patient—and patients weren't so common then—was a drummer, and his special line was glass. Before I could put up any effective attack he had whipped out of his bag a carafe and a tumbler.

" 'These,' he said, 'are the perfect things for a doctor's waiting- or consulting-room. Elegant in shape and—what is much more to the point—unbreakable. All medical men suffer from breakages; but with these

you need never fear such expense again. They are made of a new patent toughened glass, so that—well, look!'

"To prove his words he tossed the carafe on to the floor, and it bounded lightly along it, intact. He retrieved it and threw it up to the ceiling, and down it came and again bounced along, intact. Then he pitched the tumbler on the floor, and it survived the shock. Then he offered them to me, and I threw them about.

"The upshot of it was that I bought them, chiefly for fun, and he went away happy.

"That was in the morning. On the evening of the same day I was dining with some friends and going to a ball, and also on that evening I was expecting my eldest brother on a visit.

"He was a don at Cambridge, and was coming from there—a long journey—and as he had not arrived by the time I had to go, I left him a note of apology explaining the situation and putting the house and the cellar at his disposal, and went off to my revels."

He stopped and began to laugh softly. Personally I am all in favour of men enjoying their own jokes, and it was a delight to see his eyes moisten and disappear amid the wrinkles.

"It was a very jolly dance," he resumed, "and I was there till the end, reaching home somewhere about half-past two. On the hall-table I found a note from my brother, adjuring me, however late I was, to give him a call and say how do; and I prepared to do so, but first I looked into the consulting-room to see if there were any messages. The first thing I saw was the carafe and

tumbler, and as my brother had always had the same interest in the marvellous and unexpected as I—we had been great experimentalists as boys—I took the tumbler with me.

"Quietly opening his door I struck a match and lit the gas.

"He at once woke.

" 'Hullo, old man!' he said, blinking and sitting up; 'I hope you've had a good time.'

" 'Splendid,' I said. 'But, I say, I want you to see this. One of the most extraordinary things in the world.'

"I showed him the tumbler and lifted it above my head.

" 'Now watch,' I said, and flung it to the floor, where it broke into about ten million pieces. . . .

"To this hour, no matter what I do or say, it is my brother's firm conviction that I was drunk."

A REVOLUTIONARY PROPOSAL

Every one must have been struck by the prevalence of dishonesty. Yet we all, by straining our memories, can recall isolated cases of the other thing. The problem is—Is it not possible to increase their number?

I have a sugestion towards solution.

It is at the moment difficult to open a newspaper without being confronted by reports of turpitude, from petty larceny to murder. Wives (we read) have been poisoned by their husbands, householders have been shot by burglars, hotel guests and actresses have been robbed, jewellers' shops have been rifled, confiding women have been deceived by bigamists, gold bricks have been sold to Colonial visitors, signatures have been forged, Chinamen have been caught selling cocaine, investors have been defrauded, horses doped, and thousands of small thefts have been committed. These are daily occurrences, and all receive the reward of print. Is it possible—since so great are the uses of advertisement—that the knowledge that publicity is to follow may have had an inciting effect on all those malefactors, and that, were no reports to be published, this tendency to crime would diminish or disappear? That may be too fanciful a notion; but at any rate we can never know till we try.

Supposing a newspaper were published with no reports of crime in it whatever? Is that too anti-social, too restrictive, an idea! If crimeless journalism became the rule it might, of course, land certain newspaper proprietors in the Bankruptcy Court; but how honourable a way for a peer of the realm to get there!

But, if records of turpitude are considered still to be essential to our civilization, might not space—of course not equal space—also be given to records of acts of virtue? Then, if the incentive of publicity is a fact, virtue might increase and every one would be happy. This kind of thing (I have made the heading lurid, but in course of time the reader would be more amenable to such a title as "Sensational Placidity in Kennington"):—

WIFE ARMED WITH CHOPPER

Emily Tyler, 54, wife of a Kennington plumber, after many remonstrances with her husband for staying so late at his Club, lost patience and went herself to fetch him home, armed with a chopper. After extricating him from his companions she kissed him lovingly and led him quietly back arm-in-arm.

With these eyes I have more than once seen obviously needy persons standing at railway bookstalls, where, owing to the rush, customers' coppers have not yet been collected; but they have picked none up. I have seen, in tea-shops, people sit down at tables just vacated, on which the twopenny or even sixpenny tip still remained, and make no attempt to pocket it. If those

heroic creatures were publicly given credit for their valour in resisting temptation, would any harm be done? Surely not.

All this is but exordium to the story of an incident which occurred to me the other day. I was in an omnibus going East along the Strand, sitting next the door. At a certain point somewhere near the Bush Building, while the conductor was on the top, a man seated at the far end rose to leave, and as he passed me he handed me a penny and asked me to give it to the conductor for him, and jumped off.

Here was a case of peculiar honesty, for there are many persons of ordinary sound morality—as between man and man—who, if the conductor had chanced to forget to collect their fare and they were in a hurry to get out, would look upon it as a gift from Heaven and accept it in that spirit.

Others might employ the arguments of sophistry. The rights of companies, they might say, are notoriously less sacred than those of individuals; it is an adventure, and an innocent one, to bilk a bus; the block at Wellington Street, having been longer than usual, had meant an even graver loss of time than Londoners are usually subjected to, and if anyone can induce the road-mending traffic-congesting authorities to attend to their business surely the omnibus companies can! Therefore not having done so they should be penalised. The conductor had neglected his duty. And so on.

This man, however, was more scrupulous, and he entrusted me with his penny. I am proud to be able

here to do honour to his action, and if I knew his name I would print that too, and his address.

But to such an extent are our minds saturated with suspicion, so prone are we to expect dishonesty and indecorum instead of virtue, gall and darkness instead of sweetness and light, that I have to confess with shame that when I related this incident to a friend of mine—or one whom I had hitherto looked upon as a friend—she asked, "And did you give it to the conductor?"

A world which, really, must be improved.

THE AMAZING WEEK

ALTHOUGH this is a fish story, people who don't like fish stories need not be afraid of it. It is not that kind of a fish story.

Once upon a time—in fact only a few days ago—there were two roach swimming in the river Thames. Two ladies. The part of the Thames that they inhabited was at Maidenhead and they knew practically no other. They had been born there, and there, until a few days ago, they had successfully avoided both the natural maladies and dangers incident to the life of young fish and the insidious attraction of the dainty allurements fixed by man to his barbed hooks. They may now and then have strayed towards Taplow or Cookham, and in a daring adventurous mood, on occasions of flood, they perhaps actually reached Maidenhead High Street and peeped into a shop or two; but for the most part they remained in the home waters in their own set. It was a nice set, conscious of being better behaved than some of the frequenters of the lawns at the riverside inns.

On a recent Sunday, however, came disaster. Almost at the same moment, for they were the kind of girls who shared experiences, first one of the roach and then the other, after gulping at a morsel of floating suste-

nance, was conscious of a sharp pain in the mouth and then was irresistibly pulled upwards through the friendly water into the less desirable air, and then, after a cruel wrench, much worse than the dentist's, deposited in the utterly abhorrent dryness of a creel. They had been caught. They had fallen to the rods and lines of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Fortescue, of Church Street, Chelsea, who had come down in their fourteen-four for a day's fishing and for an hour or so had been seated in a punt on two kitchen chairs, getting colder and colder, but hoping for the best—the best hopes of anglers being indistinguishable from the worst fears of fish.

So far there is nothing in this episode to lift it to the honour of record in print. I am aware of that. Young professional men and their wives, while life still has an edge and responsible nurses can be left behind, have constantly gone by car to riverside spots on Saturdays and Sundays either to fish or to loaf; roach have constantly been caught. But this is perhaps the first occasion on which two roach were ever taken out of the river at Maidenhead on one Sunday, and on the next—but you shall hear.

Such a miracle having happened, the narrative passes from me to the two fish as served by them to their friends a few days later, when, to the intense surprise of all subaqueous Maidenhead, which is, of course, the real Maidenhead, they arrived, exhausted but jubilant and voluble, in their old haunts.

"But where have you been?" the others clamoured. "We thought you had gone for ever."

"Yes, where have you been?" (a little reproachfully). "There was a memorial service for you; very impressive. Don't say that was all wasted!"

"The last that was seen of you, you were beating in the void your luminous tails in vain."

"Tell us, tell us."

The two roach, who needed no such invitation, then began, telling their adventures, as two girls must, either in unison or both together.

"It was dreadful—horrible," said one.

"Yes," said the other, "at first we could do nothing but lie in the basket, getting weaker and weaker and reminding ourselves and each other of what fools we had been."

"But your mouths," some one asked—"didn't they hurt?"

"Oh, we forget all about that in thinking of our folly: in remorse."

"Yes, that's when it all comes back," said her sister, "when you're pegging out. You'll know."

"Then the people unmoored," said the other, "and rowed to the bank, and we were carried away; and after a while there was a lot of noise and shaking; and then we fainted away. Didn't we?"

"Yes, practically. I thought I was dead. Indeed I wanted to be."

"So did I. And I shall never understand why we weren't. We must be intended for some wonderful career."

"Get on, get on," said the others.

"Very well. The next thing we knew was that the noise and shaking had stopped, and we were in a hot room and the woman was surrounded by children and was saying, 'There, now, be quiet for a moment and I'll show you the darling little fish Daddy and I caught exactly at the same time. Two roach.' As she said this she held us up. I was just conscious, but thought it was the next world."

"So did I," said the other.

" 'Oh, what pets!' the children cried. 'Are they dead?'

" 'Yes,' said the man. 'Of course they are.'

" 'What a shame!' said the children. That was nice of them, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said the other; "but don't forget what they said next. They said, 'We can have them for breakfast, can't we.' "

"Yes, they did; and their horrible mother said, 'Of course, darlings'; and then she gave a little squeal. 'George,' she cried, 'I'm certain that that one moved!' This was me."

"I thought it was me," said the other.

"No, me. 'Purely muscular,' said George; 'of course they're dead.' "

"And then," said the other, "one of the children screamed out, 'Oh, Mummy, the other one moved! They're not dead, they're not dead!' and they jumped up and down in the most gratifying manner. Really, children aren't so bad."

"And then," said the other, "they insisted on our being put in the bath. The little Samaritans!"

" 'I thought you wanted them for breakfast,' said the mother. A loathsome creature! 'But let's have them in the bath first,' they said. 'If they're alive it's much more fun to watch them swim.' "

"And one of the boys said, 'We might fish for them and catch them again, every now and then.' Didn't he?" the other asked. "Didn't he?"

"He did," said the other.

"All these words, you must understand, came to us as in a dream, and then suddenly we returned to real life again in the water of the bath. 'Well,' said the man, 'it's the most extraordinary thing. I shall write to *The Field* about it.' How long we were in the bath I have no notion."

"What is this bath you talk so much about?" asked one of the company, who was accustomed to do more talking than listening.

"Oh, don't you know?" said the heroines. "How odd! But, of course, you've never had our experience. People keep great white tanks in small rooms to splash in in the mornings. Not in bathing costumes, as they do here, but all bare. When they were splashing we were taken out and put in a pail. The father splashed first. He sang too. It was horrible. Then the mother. Then the children. When the last had finished, we were put back again. It's a lucky thing there's this fondness for water among the hook-fiends. Nothing else could have saved us."

"Yes," said the other, "but we almost began to wish sometimes we had gone to the cook, those children were so attentive. They never let us alone. They were either

fishing for us with hooks—and of course we weren't so silly as to be caught again——"

"Nor ever will be!" said the other. "At least I'm sure I shan't."

"And I'm sure I shan't either, not if I have to starve first."

"If they weren't fishing for us with hooks, baited," said the other, "with the most repulsive things——"

"If they weren't fishing for us they were trying to catch us with their hands, and then dropping us because we wriggled so."

"I was dropped on the bathroom floor," said the other, "thirty times at least."

"But it was this that got us our chance, we mustn't forget that. They made such an awful row when we wriggled and they dropped us that the man said it must stop. 'Either eat the infernal things,' he said——"

"I'm not sure his language wasn't worse," said the other.

"It may have been. His tone was appalling, anyhow. 'Either eat the infernal things,' he said, 'or let them go. I won't have them in the bath another minute.' This was a terrible moment for us. What would they do?"

" 'Oh, we can't eat them,' said one of the children, 'they're such pretties. Let's take them down to the steps and put them into the river again.' 'Yes! Yes!' the others cried. And that is what happened. They took us down in a jug, just by Battersea Bridge, and poured us into the Thames."

"Yes, and here we are! Did you ever dream of such an amazing week?"

UNBIRTHDAY AND OTHER PRESENTS

Whoever it was that said that all presents were nice, but "unbirthday" presents were nicest, was a philosopher enunciating a general feeling. The unexpected is never so welcome as when it takes the form of an unbirthday present. There are only three other varieties, the birthday present, the Christmas present, and the wedding present, and of these the wedding present is the least interesting to buy. Both Christmas and birthday presents, except where great devotion or admiration exists, can be mechanical too; but the unbirthday present invariably calls for real solicitude and even excitement. It is possible to give wedding presents, birthday presents, and Christmas presents without any thought or affection at all: they can be ordered by post card; but the unbirthday present demands the nicest care. It is therefore the best of all, and it is the only kind to which the golden rule of present-giving imperatively applies—the golden rule which insists that you must never give to another anything that you would not rather keep for yourself, nothing that does not cost you a pang to part from. It would be better if this rule governed the choice also of those other three varieties of gifts, but they can be less exacting.

The unbirthday present, springing as it does from a desire to impart surprise and pleasure, naturally calls up one's finest feelings: one is going out of one's way to be a benefactor; one is even enjoying it too, practically participating in it; but the birthday present is a matter of routine, and its recipient can be so different from yourself that it might actually be a mistake to choose for her anything that you could bear to be seen dead with, as we say. For your dominating thought must be not to improve her taste but to gratify it. There are friends and relations—chiefly relations—whose taste is too deplorable to encourage, and to these you may safely give things that are above them; but for the most part the proper plan is to give people what they would like best. When, however, the special occasion arises, give only what you yourself like best.

The unbirthday present is peculiar in having two distinct origins. It may materialize from the wish to mark a friendship, to underline a recent experience, to provide a laugh or a thrill. Ordinary presents are sought for because dates are drawing near on which certain persons expect to be made the recipients of our bounty. The procedure is to remember that So-and-so's birthday is approaching and to set forth to find something for it. But with the unbirthday present this procedure is, in many cases, reversed: it is the sight of something in a shop window which that dear little Mrs. Mumby (to whom you wouldn't be giving presents at all if you were wise) "would rejoice in," or which was "absolutely made for" Uncle Dick, that impels us to generosity. The steady search for some-

thing suitable for Aunt Matilda on her birthday, or Cousin Rachel on her marriage, or the twins for Christmas, can be amusing enough, but the sudden inspirations that fructify in unbirthday presents carry more fun or emotion and make benevolence more electric. I can think of no more delightful existence than to be a new Haroun al-Raschid with a passion for distributing anonymous and blue-sky dividends of this kind among those by whom they would be most valued.

There are certain things which should never be given as presents at all; which we should either buy for ourselves or do without. Pictures, for example. It is very precarious to give anyone a picture. If you yourself admire it, probably its new owner won't, because two persons seldom agree in the appreciation of art; and if you admire it excessively, your duty is to keep it—your duty both to yourself and to the artist. Scent, again: unless you are sure that the scent you choose will be welcome, never give it. The same remark applies to cigars; but it is late in the day to say anything about the danger of a wife choosing her husband's cigars for him. Professional humorists have been doing their worst with that melancholy topic for many a weary year. Neckties too.

The present that requires thought and even imagination will always be difficult to select; but the present that is just a present is a far simpler matter to-day than it was, say, twenty years ago. Twenty years ago, if you wanted to give a man anything, you gave him a cigarette case or holder, or a match-box. A woman needed a greater exercise of brains. But to-

day, when every woman smokes, you give a woman a cigarette-case, holder, or match-box also. And Dean Inge has been saying there is no progress!

Of the three mechanical kinds of present—birthday, wedding, and Christmas—the wedding present is the most perfunctory; but a few heroes are left, the bull-dog breed is not extinct. "Are you going to the Blanks' wedding?" I asked a friend the other day. "No," he said; "but I was invited." "Then you've got to give a present?" I remarked. "No," he said; "I hate them both."

What one gives to bridegrooms, I have no recollection; but for brides I once invented a wedding present which appears always to afford satisfaction. I have to say "appears," because how is the giver to know for certain, thanks for presents being invariably expressed in the same terms of cordiality if not of positive ecstasy? For no matter what we give our friends when they take the plunge into the dubious waters of matrimony, or on the anniversary of their own or our Lord's nativity, we are always assured that the article was ideally chosen and that it filled an aching void. But the wedding present which I invented and which always has appeared to afford satisfaction consists of an old box that has pretensions to beauty—no matter of what it is made: ivory, brocade, silver, coloured glass—in which I place three pounds worth of postage stamps, each one carefully torn off. The stamps, it is true, in the course of time, disappear (perhaps I ought to endow these gifts?—that is a serious thought), but the boxes remain. They have to be beautiful enough

to justify a long life; and in the search for them one can have a good deal of fun.

Incidentally one may also become bankrupt, because in the progress of the hunt, which naturally takes one sooner or later to Beauchamp Place and other similar danger zones, one sees so many other fascinating things. For those whose will is weak, whose purse is slender, and whose acquisitiveness or generosity is highly developed, London is at the moment no safe city. Such recently has been the multiplication of curiosity shops and the improvement in the taste of their proprietors (there is a most seductive new bunch of them in Lower Grosvenor Place, for example), that it is wisest to bandage one's eyes or stay indoors altogether. In any case, to carry a pocket cheque-book in these neighbourhoods is, unless one is a millionaire, a peril indeed.

While on the subject of cheque-books I should like to ask why it is that, so far as I know, only one London shopkeeper—and his shop is perhaps the most famous resort of those who would buy new presents—keeps a cheque-block on every counter? What the firm's losses may be by this alluring device I have no idea: perhaps the "drawer" never has to be "referred to" at all; but the extra sales that come about through it must be enormous. It is a clever shop in other ways, too, for as you set your foot on the entrance mat the door mechanically opens. How wise that is—to welcome the coming victim! Perhaps if all such shops adopted these plans, the giving of presents would be gloriously increased and the happiness of the world doubled.

THE VOICE OF THE HAND

I WAS reading the other day a murder mystery story in which most of the running was made by a masterly elderly French detective, whose private hobby was rose-growing. One of his remarks abides with me. So telltale, he said, are the eyes, that if the whole world wore a yashmak he would still be able to make accurate deductions as to guilt or innocence. This struck me as being rather sweeping. Trained observers like this marvellous Monsieur Boulot (if there are any) may be willing to dispense with the testimony, and even the corroboration, of mouths and hands, but I personally should need them as evidence, too. Hands tell so much. It would be wrong to say that one looks at hands before eyes, but very soon after. In railway carriages they can be far more interesting than the morning paper.

I wonder if the beauty of hands is less considered than once it was. I suspect it may be, because one of my earliest recollections is of being told that a pair of hands in porcelain on a table in the drawing-room were an exact model of those of the Countess of Dudley of that day. Well, the world now pays much more homage to lovely women than it did even then, and yet I

have never seen porcelain models of the hands of any of our recent reigning beauties.

The last model that I recollect seeing was the plaster cast of Thomas Carlyle's hand at the little Carlyle museum in Chelsea, very delicate and nervous. And yet, that hands in reproduction are still not without their appeal is proved by the constant demand which, I am informed, there is in art shops for photographs of that drawing of hands joined in prayer from one of Dürer's notebooks. But, of course, it may be the religious signification of the picture that gives it its vogue.

Conjurers' hands, and particularly the conjurers who are clever with coins and cards, can be almost separate individualities; you forget the man as you watch, and think of his hands as magicians on their own behalf. As a boy, how I toiled to emulate the gifted elders who were able to make shadow animals! I admire them from afar still, but not with the passion with which I admire the pianist who plays from ear, surely the most remarkable of God's creatures! Had I never endured the misery—almost the agony—of music lessons, I might admire them less; but knowing with what difficulty I could hit the right note, even with the most careful thought and after great hesitation—and even then probably hitting the next one with it—I am the more bewildered by this easy ability, and ashamed at my lack of it.

To this day every pianist seems to me miraculous; but the pianist from ear, the pianist who can instantly reproduce the tunes from the musical comedy you have

just seen together for the first time—he is a demi-god. For such a power as that I would give anything that I have. Which reminds me that the Creator must smile a little when he thinks of the range of activities which the hands that He made, chiefly, as I suppose, to delve, to spin, and to convey food to the mouth, have added to those primitive functions. The hands, for example, of Tom Newman and Ignace Paderewski, the hands of Augustus John, the hands of that most accomplished of living jugglers, Rastelli, the battered hands of Harry Strudwick, the conquering hands of Jack Dempsey. But fisticuffs, of course, are no new development; they began almost when the world began. I have had, by the way, the honour of meeting Jack Dempsey on a social occasion, and I can assure you that when I laid my own not inconsiderable paw in his, it looked like a leaf in the storm.

There used to be a joke, in the days when jokes about the Chosen People were more common than now, that if you tied a Jew's hands to his sides you made him dumb. But it would be more true of the Latin people, whose manual gestures are far more varied and constant. An Englishman and an American can describe a fight, a motor accident or a Rugby match —in fact anything but a spiral staircase—with their hands in their pockets; but an Italian couldn't read a page of a Blue Book without gesticulation. It is as though the Latin hand were an independent organ of speech. This constant need of the hands to fortify conversation is perhaps one of the reasons why the Latin people so seldom have them in their pockets:

that, and the circumstance that most Latin men carry purses. In England the purse is rare among men.

Among the various privileges of hands, the jingling of money in trousers pockets surely ranks high. I am certain that no small part of the dejection which, on a recent visit to Austria and Germany, I noticed in the countenances of the men in those countries is due to the circumstance that they have no money to jingle. Paper money they have in profusion—paper money that used up my multiplication table very swiftly and left me gasping—but nothing to jingle. The jingling of money confers independence and authority on a man; the jingling of too much money leads to arrogance—but the risk perhaps is worth running.

I don't know whether an illustrated book about hands in pictures by the great masters has ever been prepared, but it would be of interest. Some, it is well known, paid little attention to them; Van Dyck, for instance, gives all his sitters the same hands, long and graceful and usually in the same posture—surely a very curious piece of carelessness on the part of one who must have been interested in character? But that he knew a great deal about hands is proved by the studies that he made; in Brussels there is a frame of them.

Rembrandt was as far opposed to this neglect, or disdain, as could be, the hands in his portraits being hardly less important than the features, and being always accurately drawn. In the picture erroneously called "The Night Watch," the hand of the man in the middle seems to be thrust right out of the canvas.

The early religious painters of Italy had a convention of hands and gave all the saints and the Madonna the same. Perhaps Botticelli's are as beautiful as any, but they lack any special quality beyond length and slenderness and the suggestion that no work was ever done by their possessors more exhausting than folding them in ecstasy, or holding babies and flowers. The sculptor, Mino da Fiesole, made the longest fingers of all. Leonardo was perhaps one of the first painters to consider hands worthy of thought; but then Leonardo was first in so many ways. The hands of the Virgin in the picture called "The Virgin of the Rocks" in our National Gallery are lovely, but Leonardo's masterpiece as a painter is the extended hand of Christ in "The Last Supper," at Milan, the moment being that in which He tells the disciples that one of them is to betray Him.

There are many beautiful hands in the National Gallery; those of the Virgin in Piero della Francesca's "Nativity" at one extreme of unstudied simplicity, and at the other the hands of the tailor in Moroni's famous portrait. The hand of the man sitting at the table in Peter de Hooch's "Interior of a Dutch House" is admirably drawn, and if you look at it closely you will see that it once held the glass that has now been given to the woman by the window.

Palmists, I suppose, are born and not made, or I might try to qualify. I always envy the professors of this mystery as they settle down to their occult task. I don't know what is the attitude to it of the Fellows of the Royal Society, but my own experience of palm-

istry comprises some very extraordinary results. Total strangers have read in my hands secrets that I alone could have told them. And why not? Surely if the Creator could make Darwin tulips and peacock butterflies, the chambered nautilus and the starry heavens, it may be conceded that He could also, if He liked, amuse himself by writing our lives on our palms.

But if palmists are under suspicion, manicurists most certainly are not, and I consider them to be envied, too. Manicuring is an excellent profession for a girl; it is not exhausting, it brings her intimately into association with a number of people, among whom a few must have something to say worth hearing, and she is devoting her time and thought to making those beautiful things, hands, more beautiful. A very worthy life! Perhaps her tragedy, however, is that she misses the people who don't go to manicurists.

YOUTH AT THE HELM

I. Friendship's Offering

It was in those careless far-off days when we were all beginning and had vowed to do what we could for each other, that we used to meet at the Gate House on Hampstead Heath (where knives and forks used by Dick Turpin were kept in a glass case), and, either in one of the arbours or upstairs indoors, according to the weather, compared notes and planned campaigns.

It is of one of the more shameless of those campaigns that I would tell.

Among us was one whom I will call Tommy Ridler (now an illustrious publicist). To him Fortune had been less kind than to some of us, and he had got not even one toe on the ladder; nothing that he wrote was accepted.

As I have said, we were all pledged to help each other, and on the evening that I am recalling, Dick Struthers (also now well known by another name), who had just come back from a holiday on the Norfolk Broads, was talking about the birds there.

"Take the corncrake," he said. "That's a rum 'un

if you like. It makes a row all day and half the night, and no one's ever seen one yet."

"Nonsense," said I. "They have them in museums."

"Maybe," he said. "But museums don't count."

"Still, they had to be seen before they could be caught and stuffed," I said. I was argumentative in those days.

"Taxidermists don't count either," said Dick. "Speaking generally, no one has ever seen a corncrake. Jolly interesting, isn't it?"

Even I agreed.

"Look here, Tommy," he went on, "why don't you mug up the corncrake in some book and write about it. That's the kind of thing editors like: facts about a mystery, even if the mystery's only a blooming bird. Give your inventive powers a rest for a few minutes and try information for a change."

And Tommy did so. He found out all about the corncrake, otherwise known as landrail, one of the *Rallidæ*, the *Rallus crex* of Linnæus, and all the rest of it. He dug out of the Classics the legend that it was the corncrake or landrail that was the *Ortygometra* which led the quail on its voyages. He described its self-protective colouring (see Mimicry in Nature); its ventriloquial powers, so that you never know in which direction it is; its haunts; its eggs, usually eleven in number, laid in a nest in the long grass; and the whole bag of tricks. And what is more, he got the article accepted. There it was, in our favourite hunting-ground for guineas, *The Globe and Traveller:* "The Mysterious Corncrake—From a Correspondent." Not

a "Turnover"—Tommy's style was not flexible enough for that—but an inside column.

"Splendid!" said Dick when he heard the news. "Now we must get busy and rub this in. Tommy's future as the popular ornithologist must be made."

"Is ornithology a necessity?" Tommy pathetically inquired. "You've no notion how I loathe birds."

"Of course," said Dick, "you must continue as you have begun. You must be identified in the public mind with our feathered friends. That's the art of success."

And he outlined the campaign.

During the week the Editor of *The Globe and Traveller* received the following missives:—

THE LAURELS, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

DEAR SIR,—My husband, who is a well-known medical man and amateur ornithologist, is deeply interested in the article on the Corncake which you printed last week. He would much like to be put in touch with the author, if that is permissible, and he hopes that you will be able to give us more of his admirable work.

I am,

Yours faithfully,
SELINA PARRISH

107, TRUMPINGTON STREET, CAMBRIDGE

DEAR SIR,—You have, if you will allow me to say so, discovered a real treasure in the contributor who writes

on the Corncrake. I have rarely read anything more fascinating than his account of that strangely elusive bird. It would be a boon to me personally if you would invite him to give you a series of articles on other of our stranger birds, such as the woodcock, the snipe, the cruel but ingenious butcher-bird, and, say, the hawk family, of which too little is known.

I am,

Yours faithfully,
MARCUS GROW

THE NOOK, HAMPSTEAD HEATH

DEAR SIR,—You can't think what a pleasure you gave to my family and myself by that article on the Corncrake. If only there was less about politics and divorce and police and more nature, how much sweeter would the papers be! Please get this fascinating Correspondent to write again.

Yours sincerely,
AGATHA THORN

8, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, W.C.

DEAR SIR,—Kindly forward the enclosed letter to your Correspondent on the Corncrake. It is not written to attempt to lure him from your literary staff, but to congratulate him on a first-class piece of work and wish him health and strength to continue.

Yours faithfully,
AMBROSE HEARTY

St. Francis's College, Eastbourne

Dear Sir,—Your article on the Corncrake is just what we want in school, and I hope you will have more of them. My boys are all keen on birds.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,
Henry Swift

United Service Club, S.W.

Dear Sir,—I shall be grateful if you would kindly favour me with the name and adress of your correspondent who writes on the Corncrake. I am preparing a work on migratory birds and should much value the assistance of his knowledge and literary skill.

I am,

Yours faithfully,
(Colonel) Hugo Dundas

Sea-Scent, Bournemouth

Dear Sir,—Speaking with my uncle, the Vicar of Dewfield, the other day, he said that, in a long experience as a reader of ornithological books and articles he could not remember a more informing or interesting paper than that in your last number on the Corncrake. The Vicar is now in his eightieth year and very feeble, and it would be a kind act on your part to arrange for further articles by the same writer as a solace to his declining days.

I am,

Yours faithfully,
Lucy Spearing

Need I add that all those letters and many more were written by Tommy's four friends either the same evening or during the next few days, and arrangements made with friends or relations for the postmarks to be correct? Not bad, were they? One even was written by the disgraceful hand of Tommy himself. Can you guess which? The last. Oh, Tommy!

But the sad thing is, they didn't take the Editor in.

II. The Little Brothers of the Poor

It was on one of our walking holidays that we came to a certain inn, in a small Berkshire town, and made it our home for two nights instead of one. The reasons for such a long stay were the flavour of the ham and the friendliness of the host and hostess, added to the fact that the place occupied a key position for the Berkshire Downs, which we were proposing to investigate.

The inn—the "Red Lion" we will call it—was old and spreading, with a front half timber and whitewash, several thatched roofs, stable-yard, yellow-and-white spaniel, fantails, and a large empty room at the back. Behind all this a garden. A rookery not far away. The landlord had been a footman and his wife a cook, in the same family, and they had but just taken over the licence. Other houses in the place were however still most in favour, as the previous tenant of the "Red Lion" had been famous for short measure—the unpardonable sin in a Boniface—and the landlord confided to us his anxiety as to whether or not he would

be able to hold on. It was a free house, you see, without any brewery-backing.

We were in the neighbourhood of Tom Hughes' "White Horse" the next day, eating our lunch in a shelter from the wind, when Dick Struthers suddenly said, "I have it. I know how to help the 'Red Lion.' We'll stock a museum for him. People love curiosities and that'll give him a pull over the other inns."

"But won't it cost an awful lot?" Tommy Ridley asked.

"Awful lot your grandmother!" said Dick. "We've all got half a dozen things we would part with cheerfully, and the rest can be begged or picked up for next to nothing."

"Then you don't mean real curiosities?" Tommy asked in wonder.

"They'll be real enough for the purpose when they've got their labels on them," said Dick. "I know this is a good scheme," he continued. "I know quite half a dozen inns with museums, and they're always popular. Now," he went on—he was in his element—"in forming a collection of curiosities to act as a lure to licensed premises we have to ask ourselves, 'What does the public want? Does it want instruction or entertainment?' The answer is, 'Entertainment, with a suggestion of instruction to flatter it.' 'Does it want generalities or personalities?' The answer is, 'Personalities.' We then ask ourselves, 'Are the persons likely to be more popular or less popular according to their depravity?' 'More popular.' "And if you ran short of picturesque depravity what other class of souvenirs

would best act as a magnet?' The answer is, 'Those appertaining to royalty.' Very well, then, we know how to proceed. In your researches for relics you will concentrate on those that belonged or might have belonged either to criminals or kings."

That evening Dick explained the project to the landlord, but without emphasizing the element of deception. "If you'll go to the expense of some glass-cases in that big empty room," he said, "we'll undertake to fill them for you with the right stuff.

"Under your sign-board," said Dick, "you will have the inviting words, 'Visit Our Old Curiosity Museum. Free.' If you don't add 'Free' they won't come in, because they'll think it's a shop. Once they come in they'll stop, get excited, get thirsty, and when they go away they'll tell their friends about it, and some of them very likely will send you things of their own for it. Every one's got something that might suit. Is it a bargain?"

The landlord said that he couldn't well say No. It was all very sudden, but we seemed to be clever gentlemen, and he was a sporting kind of fellow himself. Yes.

And so we went ahead and for some weeks had the most amusing time in searching our own homes and our friends' and relations' homes, and London's junk shops, for odds and ends that might carry a seducing inscription. I don't suppose that we spent a fiver all told, but among the articles thus accumulated were some astonishing rarities.

We had some uproarious evenings in fixing their significance and writing labels.

"Here's an old wedding-ring," I said. "Whose is it?"

"Are there any hall-marks?" Dick asked.

"No," I said; "they've been worn away."

"Then it's one of Henry the Eighth's, of course. Write a label, 'One of Henry the Eighth's wedding-rings.' "

"But would it be enough of a rarity? He had so many wedding-rings."

"Make it Ann Boleyn's as given to the executioner in the Tower."

"Here's a jemmy," said Tommy Ridley. "Whose is it—Jack Sheppard's, I presume?"

"No," said Dick; "too far back—Charles Peace's. We'll give Jack Sheppard one of those old pistols. 'From the Trenchard Collection.' The name of a collection is very convincing."

"Here's a piece of wire from one of the Duke of Wellington's field telephones," said Tommy proudly.

"Don't be silly," said Dick. " 'Fanciful but not impossible' must be our motto."

"Then what shall I do with it?" Tommy asked.

"Don't waste it," said Dick. "Call it 'Wire from first Atlantic cable.' "

And so we went through the list.

We had some of Mary Queen of Scots' hair (Dick's sister's—and they had an awful row over it too, he told us) cut on the scaffold; some of Lady Jane Grey's (from the same source); one of Charles the First's handkerchiefs ("From the Howlett Collection"); an hour-glass that used to stand on the ledge of John

Knox's pulpit; a flag from the *Victory* ("From the Hamilton Collection"); a hare's foot that had been Garrick's; a make-up stick that had been Sir Henry Irving's (Dick knew several actors); some grains of gunpowder from one of Guy Fawkes's tubs ("from the Monteagle Collection"); a piece of concrete, a relic of the Wainwright murder; a cricket-ball used in a famous Test Match; a piece of gold lace from a coat worn by Charles II; a neckerchief that was Nell Gwynn's; a chip of wood from a tree cut down by Mr. Gladstone; a shoe worn by Hermit when he won the Derby in a snowstorm; a threepenny-bit with the Lord's Prayer on it; a series of finger-prints by famous malefactors (I made these); the favourite glass from which Robert Burns used to drink his toddy ("From the John Anderson Collection"); the pen with which Dickens wrote *Pickwick;* one of Sweeney Todd's razors, and so forth. It was a marvellously catholic assemblage, chosen with great knowledge of the narrow range of the ordinary tripper's interests and historical and literary knowledge.

That was years ago, when the landlord was simple and slim. To-day he has retired, lives at Bournemouth, weighs eighteen stone and has a son at Oxford.

GIVING PLACE TO THE NEW

"She would be more attractive," said a witty and comely lady of one less comely, "if it weren't for that rush of teeth to the head."

I heard that, I forget how long ago, and have thought of it again as a motto of the new conversation; for it is becoming impossible, even in mixed company, among strangers, to sit long without hearing dental talk.

The weather will never fail, but teeth come next. It used to be books and plays; but those are now later claimants for notice; we don't reach either until we have exchanged remarks on molar trouble.

"Thank heaven!" he says over the soup, "I can at any rate bite this."

"Are you like that too?" asks his neighbour.

"I shall never be anything else again," he replies gloomily.

"Ah!" says she, "you should have gone to mine."

(According to the poet Whittier the saddest words that can fall on the ears of men are, "It might have been." But he wrote too soon. The saddest words to-day are, "You should have gone to mine"; and not only the saddest but almost the most frequent.)

"No good, no good," he replies, "I am doomed. I shall never bite again," and his face lightens as he

notices that the fish is in the form of a mousse. "Something like a hostess," he murmurs.

"Did you have them all out?" she asks later.

"All the lot," he answers. "They said I should never know happiness until I did. And it's a lie. I have never known it since. They were good ones, too."

"But why did you do it?" she asks. "Mine probably wouldn't have let you. Mine is most careful."

"I thought mine was then," he replies darkly. "I go about now warning people, whatever else they do, not to have their teeth out."

At half-time his neighbour on the other side, nibbling a salted almond, passes the tray to him.

"Thanks," he says in the depths of dejection; "I wish I could; but I have eaten my last nut."

"How sad!" she replies. "But I'm sure it needn't be as bad as that. My husband has had them all out, but he eats walnuts like a two-year-old. You should have gone to mine."

The man groans.

"Would you like his address?" she continues. "He's really marvellous, and never a hint of pain. In fact I enjoy him."

"No, I beseech you," he implores; "not enjoy—not enjoy!"

All this openness about what once was a carefully closely guarded secret is very extraordinary and significant. It is another proof of the coarsening of manners that is in process. We can all remember uncles whose false teeth slipped and rattled now and then,

whose voices on the way to the bathroom were muffled and strange; but no one said anything about it, except in whispers and apart. Certainly the uncles didn't. But to-day they are capable of juggling with the two sets, upper and lower, throwing them up and catching them, or even dropping them, light-heartedly in public, just as though they were tennis-balls. To-day they are capable of sending some one upstairs to fetch them. Shame—and I suppose it was false shame and therefore we need not mind—has gone; but none the less, false shame or not, I confess to a shudder when, the other evening at dinner, one of the most fastidious men that I know, seeing, after a series of insipid dishes, the approach of a favourite one, removed his upper row without a blush, remarking, "I'll taste *that* if I die for it!"

I wonder when this new candour began, when false teeth entered the market-place, climbed to the housetops! Can that inspired farce by Mr. Shaw, *You Never Can Tell*, have had anything to do with it? Mr. Shaw, whose own teeth are, or used to be, so wonderful. That, I fancy, was the first play in which the curtain fell on a patient in the chair. Or can it be charged to the account of the great European struggle which lifted so many veils and destroyed so many reticences? The social historian must decide. Meanwhile it is a fact that the râtelier is worn less in the mouth than on the sleeve.

TWO FINANCIERS

"It is in no spirit of boasting," he began, "no trafficking with what is known as swank, but solely in order to pave the way to the incident to be related, that I say that the other day I gave a beggar half a crown."

At this very impressive opening we all sat up prepared to listen closely. Half a crown is a great sum.

"It was an absurd experience," he said, "and I dare say there were better ways out of it than I took. Perhaps you will tell me."

We made noises intimating that most of our lives were spent in telling people about better ways than they have taken. At least, I did.

"It was like this," he said. "I had come up to Town for the day, my first place of call being at Islington. Now Islington is an unknown country to me. Beyond the fact that bailiffs have daughters there, I knew nothing. So I took a cab at Liverpool Street and gave the driver the address—an office. Well, the miracle of London traffic again occurred and we got there all right; but while I was having the usual struggle with the window—this taxi having no inside door-handle and the driver being firmly nailed to his seat—a man hurried forward and opened it for me.

"At the same time he proffered a box of matches and forced me to look at him. Now, I don't set up for being one of the soft-hearted generous sort——"

Cries of "Oh!"

"No, I don't. But this fellow really touched me. He was down and out. He was very shabby, very thin and haggard. Had been gassed, I should think, and was still periodically a victim. But the worst thing was his eyes. His eyes settled it. They had a depth of pleading in them such as—well, such as in a well-organized world one man should never see in another's. It was awful.

"Of course I had to give him something, so I put my hand in my pocket, took out the only coin there and presented him with it—half a crown. I admit to being rather shocked myself when I realized what the coin was; but I gave it to him."

Murmurs of approbation.

"But if I was shocked the man was stunned. Expecting only a penny, he was overcome with joy and retired swiftly to a neighbouring doorway to collect his feelings and debate upon the best way to employ his fortune.

"Meanwhile I reached for my pocket-book to find something for the cab-fare, which was two shillings; and, behold, I had left it at home. I hadn't any money at all. I had given away my total capital. Now what would you fellows have done? That is the problem. What would you have done?"

"I," I said, "should have entered the premises I had come to visit and have borrowed the fare."

"I tried to," he said, "but the place was locked. No one there."

"I," said another man, "should have given the cabman my card and promised to send him not only the fare but a little more."

"I hadn't got a card," he said. "My cards and my Treasury notes dwell normally in the same pocket-book; the cards for a long while, the notes only on the briefest visits."

"It's quite simple," said another man. "You should have pawned your watch."

"No, I couldn't do that. My watch is too sacred. It was given to me."

"Then," said I, "why not have got back into the cab and told him to drive to the nearest place where you were known and could borrow money? Money you had to have sooner or later, anyway."

"I know. I suggested it, but the driver wouldn't do it. You know how independent they are. Either his home was near by, or one of those uncontrollable desires to eat an irregular meal, to which cabmen are so subject, came upon him. Anyway, he refused. Also, he had contrived at last to un-nail himself from the box and was beginning to look ugly; and I hate that. I would do almost anything rather than have a row with a cabman in a crowded street. So what do you think I had to do?"

"You don't mean to say," said some one in awe-struck tones, "that you asked the beggar to give you the half-crown back?"

We all leant forward and held our breath.

"Yes," he said, "I did. It was the only course left. He was still in the doorway arranging the wonderful day that would begin when 'they opened,' and I went up to him. I never felt so ashamed in my life; and I believe it's the first money I've borrowed for thirty years."

Sounds of astonishment and incredulity.

"It's true. Somehow I've managed not to have to. I'm not boasting; I'm merely keeping to the point. Well, I faltered up to him, and I said, 'I'm most awfully sorry, but I've got to ask you to give me that half-crown back.'

"I shall never forget the expression on his face. Something like terror as well as pained surprise.

"I explained the situation, and the ghost of a smile crossed his lips. 'Of course,' he said, 'it's a pleasure to help anyone in distress. I know what no money means'; and he handed me the coin."

"Good man!" we said. "And then?"

"Oh, well, then I found another cab whose driver was unaware of my financial status and I drove to my bank as fast as he could go."

"And the beggar?" I asked.

"Didn't I say? Oh, he went with me, of course."

THE BREAKING POINT

Having received from an eccentric elderly friend, who was more or less confined to the house and therefore unable to act in the matter for herself, a rather curious commission, I had been walking about London with a new interest and watchfulness. A flower of the old school, where punctilio was still honoured, she found herself distressed by the free-and-easy behaviour and the general tendency towards self-gratification of our day, and it was with the idea not only of rewarding good manners, but possibly, in a very small way, of promoting them, that she had authorized me to go to as much as a tenner (her own words were "a ten-pound note") if I came upon any startling example of public courtesy. Naturally it would be among the poorer performers; I was not to proffer any such guerdon to a Duke of a Duchess, even were they eligible. Nor was I to concern myself with such common and mechanical manifestations of chivalry as the surrender of seats in omnibuses or railway compartments. The deed must be remarkable and I was to be the sole judge.

I don't pretend that this odd service was always on my mind. Perhaps if it had been I might sooner have found an opportunity for disbursement. But, as it

happened, many weeks had passed before anything occurred unusual enough to satisfy my critical taste.

I saw some opportunities missed, I will admit. There was the incident of the hat blown from the head of the girl in an open car on the new Great West Road, which none of the three cars following hers stopped to pick up. That was a bad break; but, on the other hand, it would hardly have concerned my almonry: you can't offer a polite motorist a ten-pound note. Such virtue as his, when found, must surely be its own reward. Moreover, I was in one of the cars that didn't stop.

Were I a satirical person this difficulty in finding a recipient for my old friend's bounty might move me to sardonic mirth. Fortunately I am not. How many fruitless weeks passed I can't recollect, but at last the serach yeilded results, for one afternoon in Sloane Street I saw an errand-boy pick up a lady's dropped parcel and return it to its owner, and I knew at once that here was the qualifying deed. But to pick up a parcel and return it, you will say, is an automatic matter; it would be almost impossible not to do it. True; but there are different ways, and there was something of courtliness about this boy that was wholly unexpected and engaging. He was about fourteen, neat but rather threadbare, wearing a bowler; and when he had handed the parcel and the owner was thanking him he took his bowler off. It was that touch which decided me in his favour as a worthy competitor. Errand-boys in such circumstances would not ordinarily remove their hats; indeed I doubt even if errand-boys' fathers, with

more experience of the world, ordinarily would. Nor is it necessary that they should: to perform the act of civility is enough. But when this extra bloom of deportment is added it is gratifying.

With the thought in my mind that the boy had been carefully brought up, and wishing that there were more like him, I hurried after him, overtook him and asked if he would be so good as to give me his name and address. You see, I had not the tenner on me.

He looked at me with his batteries instantly unmasked, all the suspiciousness of London's hard-bitten children in his gaze.

"What for?" he asked.

It is always a difficult question and was never more so than now.

"I saw your politeness to that lady," I said, "and I should like to make you some little present of appreciation. Such courtesy is very rare, and in fact there is—ah—a fund for the purpose. But I shall have to send the—ah—gift—by post."

As I spoke his look had grown harder, and I thought I detected that fear of irony which haunts so many simple minds. There was no doubt as to his hostility. A Bayard, yes; but a Bayard at bay.

"A fund for the purpose," I repeated with a lack of fervour, for I could see the improbability of such a story in ears like these. "But I shall have to send it by post."

He still gave me no help. "If I might have your name and address?" I said again, vowing to myself that this was the last occasion on which I would ever

meddle with people's public demeanour, good or bad, and also realizing that for this kind of embassy some one with a long white beard was probably necessary; some one, anyway, who looks more official than I do.

He listened, retreatingly, and then he delivered his reply. "Who are you getting at?" he asked angrily. "What's the game? Can't a feller be polite to a lady without your making a song and dance about it?" He began to run. "Go and boil yourself!" he shouted back over his shoulder.

THE CRITIC

In the days when I used to write poetry I had a literary friend who wrote short stories intended for the magazines, and we dined at the same chop-house not very far from Piccadilly Circus. That was a long while ago, before motor-cars, before cinemas, before tubes, when few people had the telephone and none the gramophone. And yet we did very well. When we could afford it we jingled home in a hansom, now and then exchanging a joke through the roof with the cabman, which no one has ever done with a taxi-driver. And though there was no cinema there was Elizabeth Ann Bellwood singing at the Tivoli, and Paul Cinquevalli juggling at the Pavilion, and Wyndham was at the Criterion and Irving at the Lyceum. Life wasn't so bad.

The peculiarity of our chop-house was the extreme deliberation of the waiters. There were only two, and if it were possible for either of them to be slower than the other, he was. It was only on the understanding that you, so to speak, accepted their tardiness that you were served at all; but once having established

yourself as a customer you remained. There is something hypnotic in leisurely processes: you were drugged; but there were such positive advantages too as the excellence of the food when it did arrive, the excellence of the beer, the sweet reasonableness of the charges, and the fun of watching strangers, unaware of the special guarded character of the place, getting angrier and angrier, and at last flinging out. In a word, if you were going to the theatre, it was the worst eating-place in London; if you wanted to talk, it was the best.

I remember one evening awaiting Mark, as I will call him, with no little excitement, because I had just finished a poem and I thought sufficiently well of it to wish for his praise.

"I wanted to see you," I said. "I've written some verses which I rather think you'll like. About dreams," and I took the manuscript out of my pocket.

"Talking of dreams," he said. "I've just finished a story about one. Very odd you should have brought it to my mind like that. I should like to tell you about it. In fact, I happen to have the first draft with me, and we might see if we can't improve it while we eat."

I placed rather carefully beside my plate the sheet of paper on which my poem was written. "It's astonishing," I said, "what trouble even a short lyric can give one! No one reading this"—and I tapped it—"would believe that I spent three hours on one of the four stanzas."

"I don't know," he said. "I always feel that rhymes help you. Now, in writing a story you get no help.

The art of the short story is one of the most difficult to master. But I flatter myself—" Here he disappeared for a few moments behind a tankard—"I flatter myself I'm getting near it. This story"—he deposited his exhibit on the table too—"this story is about a man who dreams futures. He lives in a village and has got a terrific reputation for his gift. You go to him and impress your personality on him in some way——"

"If you've got one," I suggested.

"Yes; don't interrupt, please. Of course, if you've got one. And then he dreams about you. Well, my story is about one of these dreams. A girl goes to him and he dreams a future for her, and she can't frustrate it. It's very uncanny. In fact"—he glanced at himself in a mirror with some satisfaction—"I can't think how I thought of it. 'We are greater than we know'—how does the line go? Anyway, it's about this girl that I think you might possibly be able to help. . . ."

I won't bother you with any more of the story. Suffice it to say that Mark was still picking my brains when we suddenly realized how late it was and hurried off just in time to see Harry Pleon, who came on that week at the Pavilion at 10.35.

The next time we met, at the same place, I had a triumph to display: my poem had been accepted and I had the evening paper containing it in my pocket.

"This is the dream-lyric I wanted to show you a week or so ago," I said.

He read it:—

ALTRUISM.

My nights among the dead are past;
  When sleep at last is here
Into my dreams come thronging fast
  The friends of yesteryear.

They share the wild absurdities
  That mark the dreamer's track;
Caprice controls their entrances;
  But ah! I've brought them back.

Nor I nor they display surprise,
  Familiar is their shape;
I wonder if they realize
  And relish their escape?

If so, then let us sleep the more,
  To help them, over there—
Our friends not lost but gone before—
  To constant change of air.

"Not bad," he said as he handed the paper back. "I like it better than when you showed it me first."

JOE

From Stephen Dunk, farmer and churchwarden, to Mr. Septimus Rose, scholar and recluse, the new tenant of The Grange, Pulham

Dear Sir,—We should be grateful if you would give something in aid of the Pulham bellringers.

I am,
Yours obediently,
Stephen Dunk

Mr. Septimus Rose to Mr. Stephen Dunk

Mr. Septimus Rose is not a lover of church bells, which, of course, should have disappeared when clocks and watches became cheap; but, since the custom of ringing them persists, he encloses a ten-shilling note.

Mr. Stephen Dunk to Mr. Septimus Rose

Dear Sir,—I beg to thank you for your subscription to the bellringers. I note what you say about clocks, but I would respectfully point out that whereas clocks and watches are often fast or slow, the Pulham bells

keep time. I can promise your ears some rare treats on practice nights as well as on Sundays.

I am,

Yours obediently,

STEPHEN DUNK

Mr. Septimus Rose to Mr. Stephen Dunk

Mr. Septimus Rose would like the leader of the bell-ringers to know that last evening's practice, so far from being a rare treat, was notable for a very obnoxious discord causing him to regret having made any contribution to the funds.

Mr. Stephen Dunk to Mr. Septimus Rose

DEAR SIR,—With reference to your letter about the ringing, all I can say is that I am the leader and that I think it must have been Joe Grover; but you must kindly remember that Joe is new to the bells and unless he practises he'll never learn. We all do our best, but in the nature of things Wednesday evenings can't be as perfect as Sundays. A nicer lad than Joe doesn't breathe, as you, Sir, would be the first to agree if you met him. If you will kindly have patience you will soon have no cause to complain again. I have the honour to be

Yours obediently,

STEPHEN DUNK

Mr. Septimus Rose to Mr. Stephen Dunk

Mr. Septimus Rose is perfectly willing to take Joe Grover's merits as a lad on hearsay, but his ringing is atrocious. Mr. Rose suggests that for a few weeks Joe practises in some other village.

Mr. Stephen Dunk to Mr. Septimus Rose

Dear Sir,—With reference to your further letter about poor Joe, I am afraid you do not quite appreciate the position. It is one thing to practise with your own ringers and quite another to practise with strangers. In point of fact, Joe would be useless to our peal if he practised anywhere but at Pulham, and, if I may be allowed to say so, Sir, we must all learn. Joe will be a fine ringer one of these days, he has the strength and he has the will.

I am,
Yours obediently,
Stephen Dunk

Mr. Septimus Rose to Mr. Stephen Dunk

To Mr. Dunk's last letter, Mr. Septimus Rose would say that when he settled in Pulham it was for peace and quiet, and he gave his subscription to the bell-ringers because he considered himself one of the community. He did not then know, as he now does, that bellringing is a disease here. The "rare treats" that

his ears were promised have been nothing but assaults. In his opinion bellringing should be kept for Sunday, although he is convinced that Sunday also is better without it. If Mr. Dunk will arrange to confine all ringing to Sundays Mr. Rose will increase his subscription to a pound.

Mr. Stephen Dunk to Mr. Septimus Rose

Dear Sir,—With reference to your letter about practice and ringing on Sundays only, I am sorry to say it is impossible. The week-day practice has been going on for years, maybe for centuries, and such an ancient and honourable custom could not be tampered with on any account, and certainly not for ten shillings. Moreover, the inhabitants, many of which have lived here a long time, have come to expect it. I am sorry, but there it is.

And another thing, Sir, how could we promise to ring only on Sundays when there are such things as weddings, which are nothing without a peal, and funerals, where tolling is expected? In fact much of our practising is done for weddings, which is the only time when we get something extra for ourselves.

No, Sir, I am sorry, but we can't change the practice day. I think you'll find a difference next Wednesday evening. Joe is coming along nicely.

I have the honour to be,

Yours obediently,

Stephen Dunk

Mr. Joseph Grover to Mr. Septimus Rose

DERE SIR if you will give me the ten bob instead of to the others I will send in my resignashun.

Yours truely,
JOSEPH GROVER

Mr. Stephen Dunk to Mr. Septimus Rose

DEAR SIR,—With reference to your letter about the choir practice, I hasten to inform you that you are not likely to be troubled again, as Joe has retired. We shall miss the lad, for he was willing and regular, but he says he was never sure that ringing was his true calling, and so he is joining the choir, having a fair baritone voice. We are trying young Horace Peters in Joe's place, with hopes for the best, but I am afraid he will take a lot of training. From your point of view I expect it is a pity Joe left.

I have the honour to be,

Yours obediently,
STEPHEN DUNK

THE IMPENITENT

This is a favourite dream of mine; I come so well out of it.

I have got myself into trouble—it doesn't matter how. Some dispute begins it, and then, in a moment of exasperation, I have hit an interfering policeman. Nothing disgraceful, but on my arm is that terrible thing, a policeman's hand, and I am being urged towards that terrible place, the station. (It is another illustration of the poverty of our language or our disregard of verbal colour that the word for the crowded excited places where we take our tickets and enter trains for holidays in the country or abroad should be the same as the black sinister headquarters of suspicious, inquisitorial and implacable inspectors. Anyway the hand is gripping my arm and we are irresistibly moving towards the station.)

In a quiet spot I induce the policeman to stop a moment. "Look here," I say—"I'm sorry I hit you. It didn't hurt. Almost no one saw it. I apologize. To arrest me like this is too absurd. Now, what can I do for you? Name a sum. Will you take a fiver?"

He won't. "None of that," he says, and the grip tightens. "None of that. And what's more, I shall report this conversation to the inspector-in-charge."

"But look here," I say. "Just one minute. Be reasonable. I've said I'm sorry. I've offered reparation. You know perfectly well it's only revenge on your part; to arrest me is ridiculous. You don't realize what this is going to be for me. I'm known ——"

He remains inflexible.

"Ten pounds," I say, "and heaps of Sunday Zoo tickets for the children."

He quickens the pace.

"All right," I say. "But you might be a sport. You know perfectly well that this is all rot. I'm not the kind of person you're out to arrest. Losing one's temper isn't a crime, and I've already apologized, and I've been punished enough for it. But have your own idiotic way."

He has it. He is full of that terrible thing, the virtuous indignation of the Force, and on we march until at last the station is reached. Why we have no cab I can't explain. I suppose it is to make the atmosphere of humiliation more intense.

At the station there is the usual routine. The constable prefers the charge; the inspector records it, writing with extreme deliberation; friends are telephoned to, and in course of time I am free—if that is a word to apply to a peaceable, normally law-abiding and very retiring man with a decent reputation who has before him the ordeal of police-court proceedings. Free!

I pass a wretched night.

The next scene of the drama is the police-court itself.

I am in the dock, and in the witness-box, kissing the book, is the policeman. He tells the story; he tells it with a dull dreary intonation of self-righteousness. It is practically correct. The gravamen of the matter is that while in the execution of his duty he was struck by the prisoner.

"Have you anything to say?" the magistrate asks me.

I fancy I have seen him playing Bridge very testily at a club. "Is it true," he goes on, "that you attempted to bribe the officer?"

"Of course it is," I say. "I did what any sensible man would have done."

The court ripples into excited interest. The policemen, who, all through the proceedings, have been walking about, nominally on tip-toe but really on flat resounding soles, stop and stare at me. Clerks forget to whisper. I am a "phenomenon": I have admitted an offence.

"Do you mean to say," the magistrate asks, with what is meant for an awful sternness, "that you are proud of attempting to corrupt a member of the Force?"

"I didn't say I was proud," I reply. "But as for corruption—good heavens! where is the corruption? He had been exceeding his duty; I may have done wrong, but the two cancelled out. There was no mortal excuse for taking me to the station; the incident was closed. My intention in offering him a present was to give some practical proof of my regret and to avoid these foolish police-court proceedings and all

their unfortunate and very damaging publicity. In short, I did, sir, just what you would have done. Wouldn't you?"

"Silence!" roars the magistrate. He is shocked beyond bearing by the suggestion that he is a man of the world.

"This is monstrous," he resumes. "That anyone in your position should enunciate such doctrine, such appalling anti-social cynicism, is monstrous. Stand down. I will consider your punishment."

"My punishment," I reply, "is nothing to do with you. The garbled accounts in the Press constitute my punishment. I will stand down with pleasure, but before I go let me say that, if ever the need again arises to endeavour to bribe the police, I shall again do my best to bribe them. Just as you would. Wouldn't you?"

He scowls and becomes more purple.

"Wouldn't you?" I repeat. "Wouldn't you?"

I wake up in a glow of self-esteem with the words "Wouldn't you?" in my ears.

ANOTHER DERBY

I

From Mr. Jonah Punt to Sir Benton Stakes, owner of Apogee, the favourite.

May 25, 19—

Dear Sir,—Permit a stranger, actuated by none but the best motives, to bring some facts to your notice.

The Derby is to be run in a fortnight and you are the owner of the favourite. From all that I know of the horse, its pedigree, its form, its owner, its trainer and its jockey, Apogee ought to win. The opinion of the best judges is also to this effect.

I have no doubt that you have backed the horse yourself; but even if you haven't you stand to make a large sum from the prize, and also from the possession, later on, of so valuable a sire.

My object in writing to you is to let you know that unless you acquire my co-operation you cannot win. No owner can win any race if I care to intervene, because my influence is irresistible. I don't go so far as to claim that my intervention can force a horse to come in first, but I do emphatically say this, that it can prevent a horse from doing so; and it is because I want you to win the Derby with Apogee that I am writing to you now.

Briefly, you must pay me not to bet on him, because if I back him he will lose. Every horse that I back loses. But, as hope springs eternal in the human breast, I go on backing them. I am, however, prepared not to do so if you will make it worth my while. If you will send me five hundred pounds I will put a small amount on every runner but yours and keep the balance.

I adjure you to give this letter serious attention. It may look fantastic, but is not. Every horse that I back loses.

I am,
Yours faithfully,
JONAH PUNT.

II

From "The Seer's" Notes in "The Daily Wire"

The news of Apogee gets better every day and I am told that his gallop yesterday morning resembled nothing so much as streaked lightning. It will be difficult to get 2 to 1 on the day of the race.

III

From Captain Allright's Notes in "The Morning Telegram"

If ever a Derby could be said to be a cert it is the one to be run next week. Nothing but some disastrous accident can prevent Apogee from winning. The son of Apollo and Gee-whizz is probably the fastest colt that ever entered for this race.

IV

From Latest Prices

THE DERBY

Apogee evens

V

From Colonel Knut's Notes in "The Turf Oracle"

It would not surprise me if Apogee were to start odds on, but even then I advise my readers to bet fearlessly. We have this year such a chance to skin the pencillers as has never arisen in the chief of the Classics.

VI

From Dick Turpin's Notes in "The Evening Wire"

I am told that every man, woman and child connected with Apogee's stable is on the horse, and that Sir Benton Stakes, who invested huge amounts on the colt last autumn, when the price was long, is still backing him even at the present pinched rates. Confidence in horses has ruled high before and has been found to be misplaced; but I am prepared to put my only shirt on Apogee.

VII

Mr. Jonah Punt to Sir Benton Stakes

May 30, 19—

DEAR SIR,—I am astonished to have received no reply to my letter of the 25th. It was a perfectly

serious document, written in good faith, out of the wish for you to add the Blue Ribbon of the Turf to your name. I am not a blackmailer or even a beggar; I am simply your friend, who would like to have some recompense for his thoughtfulness. Five hundred pounds is nothing to a man who is about to win the Derby; to me it would be useful. And one thing is certain: if you don't pay it you can't win. There is no question whatever: horses that I back lose. I have your Derby in my hands. A speedy reply is necessary if you wish to succeed.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

JONAH PUNT.

VIII

From the Notes by "The Thunderer's" Special Racing Correspondent

For the great race of to-day there seems to be no necessity to look farther than Apogee. This fine speedy colt was never in better fettle, and he will start with the perfect confidence of owner, trainer and jockey. That J. Primus has the mount is an additional reason for assurance. Having previously subjected, with perhaps tiresome iteration, the various candidates to the minutest examination, I need not again repeat my reasons for ruling all of them out. One no doubt will come in second, and one third. The winning horse will be Apogee.

IX

Mr. Jonah Punt to Sir Benton Stakes, on Derby Day Morning

(*Reply Paid Telegram*)

This is your last chance to stop me. If you don't reply before noon I back Apogee.

PUNT

X

Paddock Wire, Morning of Race

Apogee is in perfect condition and cannot lose.

XI

Mr. Jonah Punt to Duggie Lurem

Apogee five shillings win.—PUNT

XII

Every paper heading on the afternoon of the race:—

DERBY SENSATION.

OUTSIDER WINS.

APOGEE NOT PLACED.

XIII

Telegram from Mr. Jonah Punt to Sir Benton Stakes

I told you so. My bad luck is invincible.

THE HEEL OF ACHILLES

It was not until after many refusals that I consented at last to be a personal conductor of a party of Australian friends to Avebury and neighbourhood.

They had used every incitement to induce me to forget my London duties and play truant for the day. They had said the nicest things:

"No one could explain everything so interestingly."

"You know so much."

"Yes, and you say it so well."

"You look as if a day off would do you good."

"You know England backwards."

"We should have such confidence in your information."

All this was very flattering, but my defence did not give way until one of the company—the youngest and prettiest—said, "Maybe you'll get an article out of our silly remarks. We are sure to say or do something awfully stupid."

That was an idea, certainly. Articles are not so easily come by that one can afford to throw away opportunities; and our cousins from the Dominions are, of course, when the hand that deals with them is gentle, fair game. And this one was very fair game.

"You won't be offended if I score off you?" I asked her.

She said she would adore it.

And so everything was settled and we started.

It was delightfully fine and they had provided a car which took us very comfortably.

I showed them all the sights: the new Great West Road, which opens so blandly at Chiswick; the old coaching inns where horses were changed; the miles of cabbage-fields where once highwaymen roved; Colnbrook with the bridge where you pass in an instant from Middlesex into Bucks; the ancient Ostrich inn; and then I prepared them for the first and sudden view of Windsor Castle rising in the distance in all its romantic authentic mediæval bulk.

At Slough I had the luck to remember an odd historical incident which has stuck in the memory to the exclusion of much that is more valuable—to wit, that the first occasion on which the electric telegraph was of assistance to the police in detecting a criminal was in connection with a Quaker named Tawell, who, having murdered his mistress at Slough, was, through the medium of the new invention, arrested at Paddington at the moment when, feeling safe and sound and beyond anxiety, he alighted from the train.

This story took us to Maidenhead, where I pointed out Skindle's, and we stopped on the bridge to see the river each way; and then in Maidenhead Thicket came more highwayman lore; and so on to Twyford and the river Loddon and Reading (where Quakers of a variety totally antagonistic to Mr. Tawell of Slough make bis-

cuits; a statue of one of them, with his umbrella, is in the centre of the town), and so on to Newbury, with anecdotes of Jack of Newbury and light but authoritative references to the two battles fought there—the first (as you, of course, recollect) on September 20, 1643, and the second on October 27 a year later. Then to Hungerford and so through Savernake Forest (literary references to Richard Jeffries and his *Round About a Great Estate*, and anecdotes of the famous Marquis of Ailesbury) to Marlborough (names of famous scholars), and so to our destination, Avebury, that minor Stonehenge, where lunch was awaiting us at the hospitable "Red Lion."

I will not trouble you with my learned dissertation on the famous stones, the temple, the great circle and the lesser circle, the avenue, and all the various conjectures of antiquaries as to their meaning. Suffice it to say that my reputation as one who knows and can explain, pleasingly and without pedantry, was not only upheld but increased.

We returned by way of Devizes (recollections of Sir Thomas Lawrence and his childhood at "The Bear"; references to illustrious visitors to Bath who used to stop here for the night—Quin, Foote, etc.), and so back to town, I still now and then shedding facts, and none of the party saying anything gauche at all, anything of the slightest use to my bright satirical pen.

Gradually we sank into silence, and one or two of us may even have napped: with perfect propriety, for the same road was being traversed; but between Slough and Colnbrook my fairest companion's eyes caught sight of

a motor-cycle ahead of us carrying two riders so unsuitably dressed that she drew our attention to them at once.

"Oh, do look at that!" she exclaimed. "Just think of going out on a mo-bike in top-hats and tail-coats! Doesn't that beat everything?"

"It's not so odd as you think," I replied; "just about here, that is. In most parts of England it might be peculiar, but not just about here. I'll explain."

They prepared to listen.

"Isn't it luck," said the prettiest girl, "having *him* with us—the one man who really knows?"

Having finished blushing, I resumed. "We are close to Eton," I said. "It is over there just this side of Windsor Castle. The river Thames is between them. And that motor-bicycle belongs to two Etonians out on a joyride. When you go to Eton you will notice that the older boys wear top-hats and tail-coats; the famous Eton jacket belongs to the younger boys only. Now these two ahead of us are no doubt members of 'Pop,' the swagger club of the school, and have special rights in consequence. Look at them well when we overtake them: you'll very likely see a future Prime Minister or Viceroy, a future Duke or owner of a Derby winner."

All excitement for such fateful or aristocratic lineaments, we prepared for the spectacle. But as the moment of passing arrived the prettiest girl gave me a swift and horrified glance which, although there was sympathy in it too, I would pay a hundred pounds not to have deserved.

For my Etonians turned out to be two middle-aged

men with moustaches, in rusty black, very obviously connected with a firm of local undertakers.

Alas! for the pride of "Pop."

Alas! for the pride of the cicerone.

THE PATIENTS' DILEMMA

"WHAT *may* one do?" is a question much in my mind. Ethically, no; I have very clear ideas as to the answer when matters of conduct and conscience are involved, even if my own course of action seldom coincides with them: but what is bothering me is the extent to which one should give way to temptation, should be careless in material directions.

"Ah, my dear," says guardian angel number one, after a searching scrutiny of your tell-tale features, "you've been sitting up late again. Those poor eyes of yours!"

"Don't pretend to deny it," says number two; "you were at another of those big dinners last night. I can always tell."

"You've been smoking too much," says the third (ought any man to have so many tutelary spirits?). "I know by the way your hand shakes."

And they all finish in the same words by asking for a promise that there shall be no more of it. "Do, do promise me," they say.

To which you reply, "But why? What would you have me do? Always be in bed by ten? Give up smoking? Become a teetotaller? Refuse every invitation?" For conviviality, to them, is the unpardonable sin.

The gay and insouciant Nat Goodwin, the American comedian, when his doctor told him that he was ruining his health with wine, women, and song, promised, characteristically, to give up singing. The doctor no doubt laughed; but these jealous, watchful protectors of ours won't be fobbed off with a joke like that. They want a full undertaking, if possible signed and witnessed, and stamped at Somerset House.

It is kind of them to take so much interest in us, it is flattering to us: but I wonder how wise they are, really. To begin with, what is it that we are saving ourselves for? For the whole idea is that we must be careful to some end. Longevity would seem to be the goal; but who would live to be eighty by dint of a repulsive frugality and self-denial when he could still be jolly and see seventy-nine?

One of the most annoying things about excess of any kind is not that it injures oneself, or at any rate impairs one's faculties, if only momentarily, but that other persons can be as reckless as they wish and escape consequences. A very short night now and then can be a kind of stimulant; I have often felt all the better for it, more alert and more certain of a particularly good sleep in consequence; but after two short nights running it is possible to be played out. This is an annoyance, but, since I know the rules, not an intolerable one. The intolerable annoyance is the knowledge that my friend F. L. never requires more than five hours' rest, and therefore never goes to bed till two or three. With such a constitution the old joke about lengthening one's days——

> The best of all ways to lengthen our days
> Is to take a few hours from the night——

ceases to be a counsel of imperfection and becomes true.

Then there is M. M. is one of those amazing creatures who can drink champagne for dinner, follow it with port, follow that with old brandy, and later in the evening be found clear-headed and bright-eyed with a large whisky-and-soda in his hand. I cannot manage these blends. My organism, without being delicate, is not robust enough; and if I were to take them I should awaken next morning full of gall and self-reproach; my breakfast would look like a menace and my desk like a condemned cell. Yet meanwhile M. is gay and serene, in his bath singing Pippa's song or words to that effect. My own limitations cause me bitterness, but the true source of grief is the thought of M.'s disgusting immunity. For each of us wants to be capable of all. The result is that M., when he is warned by his guardian angels of the folly of mixing, has the right merely to laugh.

And so with the other lures to which we fall—it is not so much our failure to remain unaffected by them as the capacity of our friends to get off scot-free that is so exasperating.

But nothing is ever said to us about food, although I am sure that there are many things which we eat that are as injurious as honest wine or whisky. Underdone beef, for example, can be death; but who stops us eating it? No one. Strawberries are full of the acid that makes for gout, but no one says, "I'm sure,

dear, you eat too many strawberries." And of what use are the doctors? They either first find out what we want them to tell us and tell us that, or they subscribe blindly to the great drink and tobacco heresy. "No champagne," they say; "no red wine; no white wine; whisky-and-soda if you feel you must have something. And two cigars a day, mind, not more." And all the while we may be ruining our systems by eating the wrong things or taking too much exercise, or even be the victims of coffee or tea!

Apart altogether from the fact that one man's poison may be another man's meat, there are two reasons why too much thought can be given to the care of one's health. One of these reasons is a factor which all our solicitous censors consistently overlook, and that is that we are a part of a highly organized civilization. We live under such conditions of artificiality and stress that what would be fatal excess or excitement to primitive man is part of our routine. In a city such as London, of stone streets, electric light, petrol-driven cars, tubes, smoke, fog, paper-boys, continual noise, and hot and seasoned food, life, to be natural, must be feverish and forced. Man was probably intended to subsist among green and trees, to go to bed because it was dark and rise because the sun had already risen, to walk, or to ride on horseback, to eat roots and fruit and to drink from the spring. Even a drop of whisky or half a cigarette might cause him woe and disturbance and certainly would be bad for him; but in a world in which spirits and tobacco play such a rôle as in ours it is time to take their existence as granted: even to

consider them essential, and at any rate to minimize their peril. Where all is hectic and strident, rapid and fatiguing, narcotics and stimulants have their appointed tasks.

But its artificiality is not the only thing that civilization offers as a palliative for a certain intensifying of one's way of living. Look also at its dangers. What is the use of laboriously and against-the-grain striving for old age if one of a million skidding motor-buses at any moment may lay you low?

And there is still another and far deeper reason for suspecting the wisdom of our disciplinary mentors, and that is the treachery to the community which can proceed from excessive self-protectiveness. The man who is so painstakingly cautious about doing his own body no harm seldom does anything for anyone else.

WINDFALLS

Recessional

The world now and then—praises be!—goes backward.

Hugh, who is four years old, lately left his perfectly appointed London home for a few days at a seaside town where some of the most recent improvements are lacking.

His mother went down for the week-end, to see how the place was suiting him, and Hugh and his nurse were at the station.

"We've got the most exciting thing in our house you ever saw," he said.

"What is it?" his mother asked.

"No," he said, "it's a secret. You'll see it this afternoon, just before tea." He jumped for joy.

Just before tea the great moment came and with it the triumph, the novelty.

The gas was lighted!

A Philosopher

"And where do you go for your holidays?" I asked him.

"We don't go anywhere," he said. "I can't afford it. And I don't care about it very much either. Lodgings are not comfortable."

He resumed his attack on my thinning locks.

"Every one should have some kind of change," I said.

"That's right," he replied. "And we do. We've got a little plan of our own that's like a holiday and isn't one; it gives us a change and doesn't cost anything."

I asked for the solution.

"It's very simple," he said. "You'll laugh at it. But it's this: we just exchange bedrooms. There's my wife and myself and my son and my daughter. Three rooms. Well, we exchange. We move the furniture and the pictures, and there you are. You wake up in the morning and look out of a different window. The door's in a new place. It's a change."

"And are your family satisfied too?" I asked. "Your son and daughter? Don't they want the seaside or the country?"

"No," he said; "they're quite happy. But sometimes they ask if they may re-paper their walls, and I let them. That makes a change too."

Life

Once upon a time, on a gusty day, a man was counting his money in his car, and one of the notes blew away all unknown to its owner.

It lodged unseen in the wet grass at the side of the road, until by and by two wayfarers came along. One

of them was a millionaire returning from the neighbouring golf links; the other was a wretched old woman faint from hunger. It was the millionaire who, preceding her by a few yards, found the note.

Bread on the Waters

Uncle Roland, home from the East, was on his first visit to his married sister since the boys were mere mites, and he made himself very popular. When it was discovered that his birthday was on November 2 the boys clubbed their pocket-money to give him a present worth having, as a mark of their very great esteem. They gave him five shillings'-worth of fireworks.

The Physiognomist

London, when she lost the hansom and the four-wheeler, lost also the waterman; for such was the odd name by which the cab-rank attendant used to be known. His official position was that of refresher of horses, but he gave more attention to the duty of looking out for fares, catching their eyes, holding the door open for them with one hand and extending the other for twopence.

We could do with the waterman now, for taxi-drivers have a way of sinking either into newspapers or slumber, and disregarding signals of distress. But except here and there he has gone. One, however, was on duty the other day in Piccadilly, when a friend of mine—a man of distinguished appearance and of some personal

pride—was passing along the Green Park side, bent upon the economy of a bus to Kensington. As he proceeded he was aware, not far ahead of him, of a smiling roguish fellow holding open a taxi-door, with every indication that it was for him that the civility was intended.

"Here you are, Sir," said the waterman.

"But I didn't hail you," said my friend.

"No," said the waterman, "but you've got a taxi-face."

And my friend stepped in.

The Reason

I was asking my attendant, the Italian, if he intended to go to his home city, Milan, for his holidays.

"No," he said; "when my father and mother were alive I liked to go home. Now only brothers and sisters, and I don't. They think that every one in England is rich; that you have only to stoop down to pick up gold. If I give them only a little money, they treat me as though I was a criminal. If I give them much, they expect more."

The Mind-Changer

My friend the lift-man wore a look of gloom. Usually so bright and talkative, he was now silent and depressed.

"Anything wrong?" I asked.

"Everything," he said. "I daren't go home."

"Oh, rubbish!" I replied. "Of course you can. Why not?

"The missis," he said.

I admit that the reason might be a formidable one, but not in his case. From all that he had led me to imagine, his home life was serene; and I had seen the lunches she prepared for him. Thoughtful lunches.

"Tell me," I said.

He opened an evening paper and pointed to the four o'clock. "Do you see what price the winner was?" he asked.

I saw: 33 to 1. "Great odds," I said.

"Yes," he replied. "And the missis gave me half-a-crown to back it with."

"And you forgot?" I suggested.

"No, I didn't," he said. "I wish I had. It was worse than that. I changed her mind for her, and put it on something else—an also-ran. And there she is, waiting, so excited, with over four quid to come—and I changed her mind for her. Blimey, I'm not half for it!"

Blown to an Ague

A West African letter, the writer of which was smarting under an affront, real or imaginary, suffered in a Lagos bank:—

Dear Sir,—Of necessity, I am compelled to complain to you Sir, the hautiness embossed on me some hours ago.

It came to pass that I appeared before the Cashier

on the Counter this morning purposely to draw some account and I, being hasty, invoked his attention which resulted in an insult from him with the most abusive word "silly" repeatedly; which struck me to the utmost and blew me to an ague. And this insulter at once reported to the accountant, asked him to close my account simply to punish me prejudicially after having stained me respectability with unfair words.

I cannot pose as one possessing the authority to speak the faults of the staff but as a regular customer enjoying mutuality, and I believe if such a process does not receive a full stop which it deserves, it will be a means of suffocation to the progressive regularity of the customers and the advancement of the company.

The English language is far too limited to adequately express how achy I feel when such an abuse was focussed on me.

I do not write to teach your worthiness what to do, but respectfully conjure a precaution to suppress such a practice.

Awaiting your justificaly reply,
I remain,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant.

I see no reason why the writer of that letter should abuse the English language for its inadequacy.

The Two Wives

Once upon a time there were two girls who married on the same day, and several years afterwards they met again.

"Is your husband kind?" asked one.

"He's the kindest thing you ever heard of," said the other. "There's nothing he won't do for me. He is always buying me presents; he thinks of my comfort continually; he is unfailingly fond."

"Then you are happy?" asked the other.

"Tell me about yours," she said.

"My husband isn't like that," said the other; "he is all extremes. He lost his money, and we are not rich, like you, but very poor. And he can be so violent. Sometimes he treats me cruelly; sometimes he doesn't speak for days; often he is drunk. I never know what to expect. But then, when he is not beside himself, no one can be so loving. His love is wonderful."

"I envy you," said the rich woman.

The Secrets

I was sitting at the bedside of a philosopher aged and fragile.

"The secret of dying," he said, "is to grow fonder and fonder of sleep."

"And of living?" I asked.

"The secret of living," he said, "is to be always ready for death, but far from eager for it."

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